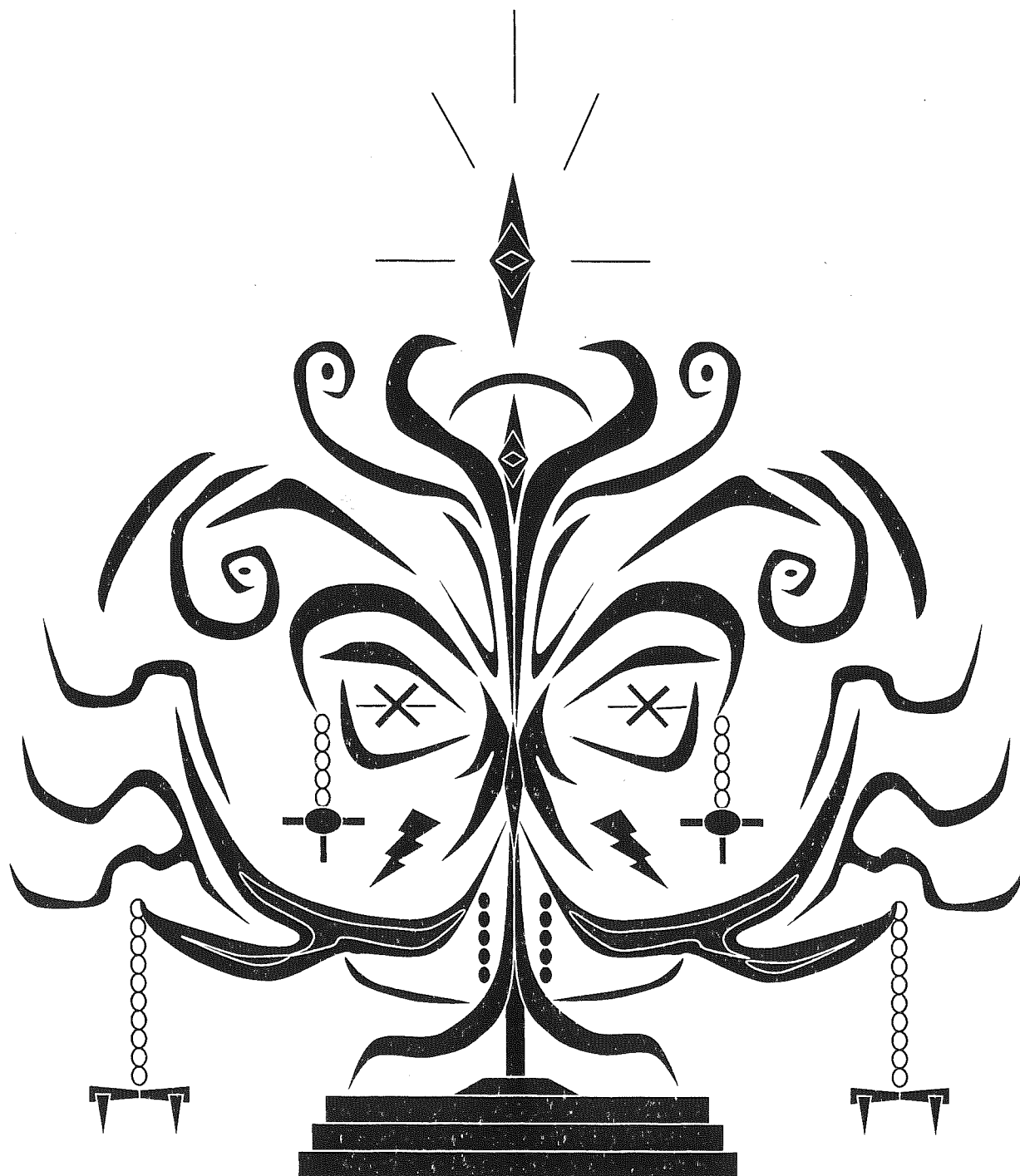


# Putting the Politics Back into Libraries



**INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**  
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# Putting the Politics Back into Libraries

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Information for Social Change is an Organisation in Liaison with the Library Association

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The editing and production of *Information for Social Change* will change each issue: this issue has been produced and edited by John Pateman, Shiraz Durrani and Ruth Rikowski.

The cover was designed by Victor Rikowski. Victor is now 15 years old and he would like to call it "Serenity of soul, or justice perturbed?"

The back page was designed by Fernando Pacheco Bellas, incorporating "Tree of Knowledge" by Mr Fish.

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## Editorial

Welcome to issue 16 of Information for Social Change. The theme of this issue is **Putting the Politics Back into Library and Information Work**. One of the dominant paradigms of librarianship is that libraries and library workers are “neutral” and “non-political”. This is seen to be a strength. Given that we operate in strongly political and Political environments and contexts, there is clearly a contradiction and tension here. One of the aims and objectives of ISC is “to challenge the dominant paradigms of library and information work”. That is what this issue of ISC sets out to do.

Our sister organisation, the Progressive Librarians Guild, has recently issued PLG News (Volume 1, Issue 1, November 2002), with the following quote featured on the cover :

“Claims of respect for human life are rhetoric if librarians continue as merely neutral disseminators of information” (Miriam Braverman)

Miriam Braverman was a longtime PLG Member who died in October 2002. Miriam was a socialist and an activist librarian. We need more library and information workers like Miriam. Instead of passive, neutral, non-political library workers, we need passionate, committed advocates of the communities we serve.

Also quoted in PLG News are the views of a new member :

“As a social democrat I’m proud to be a librarian because libraries are inherently socialist institutions”

This is a view which ISC both recognises and shares. We want libraries to be a part of that broad socialist and labour movement which is working to build a new kind of society. We want our libraries to be needs-based, not profit driven.

We have called this edition of ISC Putting the Politics BACK into Libraries, because the motives for instituting public libraries in the UK back in the 1850s were purely political. There were those who saw public libraries as agents of social change and a way of empowering the working class. And there were those who viewed public libraries as engines of social control and a method of managing the reading habits, attitudes and behaviours of the masses.

This debate continues until this day, but the public library service has been hijacked by the middle class. Public libraries are provided for and by the white middle class. The working class, avoiding all obvious attempts at social control, has mostly abandoned them. Apart from a few attempts to introduce Community Librarianship in the 1970s and 1980s, this situation continued until Labour came to power in 1997 and introduced the notion of social exclusion.

Public libraries are now being asked to address the issue of social exclusion and to be explicit about what strategies, structures and cultures they are adopting to deal with marginalised and oppressed individuals and groups such as Travellers, the homeless, asylum seekers and refugees. Many are attempting to respond to this challenge while remaining “neutral” and “non political”. In our view, this is not possible.

Libraries must move from being based in communities, to being community-based. Library managers must have staff, services and stock that reflect and meet the needs of their

communities. Those with the greatest needs should receive the highest priority and resources. At the moment we are used by those who need us the least, and we are not used by those who need us the most. We must reverse this formula, through a radical and revolutionary transformation of our library services.

This is easy to say, but very hard to achieve. Starting a Revolution is difficult if the conditions are not right and if all the power is in the hands of a narrow elite. Progressive librarians need to work with and in their local communities, reaching out to those in greatest need, and forming alliances that can challenge and then overthrow existing power structures.

Power, who has it, and how to get hold of it, is a theme which runs through this issue :

- power struggles on the front line of library and information work are represented by Martyn Lowe (Going Through the Raid), Jonathan Rutherford (Social Value of the Neighbourhood Library) and Robin Rice (The USA PATRIOT Act and American Libraries)
- Power struggles within the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) are discussed by Shiraz Durrani (IFLA, Bullies and Other Monsters) and Ruth Rikowski (IFLA Conference, Parts 1&2 )
- Power struggles in the context of globalisation and privatisation are explored by Kingsley Oghojafor (The Poison Water Called Privatisation), Jane Mackenzie (The Quiet Storm), Glenn Rikowski (The Great GATS Buyout) and Ruth Rikowski (Anti-globalisation websites)
- Power in the hands of the working class of Cuba is covered by John Pateman (In the Spirit of Wandering Librarians, National Culture Award and book reviews)

Real democracy can only exist when power is in the hands of the working class. ISC is a weapon in the arsenal of those who are struggling to achieve peace and socialism.

# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. Going Through the Raid

By Martyn Lowe

Or The emotional cost of radical publishing - A personal Account; or, An autobiographical account of Working For Free Speech.

### **Why this article?**

As I think many of you might already know , I have an interest in both the radical media and clandestine publishing. Librarians and radicals have an interest in alternative publishing and free speech. Yet there are very few radical Librarians that have had any direct experience of this kind of work. I think that I am also one of the few individuals within the radical Library world that has any direct experience of being involved with periodicals that have been raided.

This in turn has perhaps given me a lot of insights upon these issues. Over the years I have mentioned some of these experiences in passing, but I have never given a written account of them. This article is intended not only to give an account of the kind of experiences I have gone through, but also of the kind of thinking that one might have while going through them, and how this has effected my long term world view.

Some of the following stories you might find funny - they are not the kind of everyday experiences most people can really talk about. I have talked about these experiences with my friends, and they do make for a funny story in the pub. Yet it is only with those with whom I have been through these experiences, or who have gone through similar ones, that I have been able to really share my thoughts on what goes through ones mind at the time.

Going through a police raid makes for a special kind of bond with ones friends and comrades. There is also an emotional aspect to these experiences which is very difficult to explain. Going through some of the experiences I shall describe as factual accounts, but with some of them I will also give an account of the fears and worries that I had at the time.

As this is an autobiographical account it should just be read as that. A first hand account for you to study, some personal observations, and maybe some stories that you might find of interest.

### **By way of background and some notes about burnout.**

I have been involved in the Peace movement and with radical publications for some 34 years now. Many of the following accounts are about organisations that I have been involved with. So you will get some of my political history as well. As I reach my 53rd birthday I increasingly realise that in many ways I have become both an 'institute' or just a part of the 'peace movement establishment'. Not that such things really exist.

One of the things that I have also sometimes experienced is being lionised for the political work that I have done over the years. It might be good for my ego, but I just think: What have I done with my life? And What do I want to do next? One of the norms of peace movement activity for many people is to reach 'burn out'. So just to carry on for year after year must mean that I have some insights and

observations that might be of use to fellow activists.

In writing this I guess that you will get a number of insights into the kind of person I am, and how I think. It can be frightening to expose oneself, but as an ex-girlfriend once said to me : "what the hell?"

## **Freedom of Speech**

Speakers Corner in London is hailed as an example of just how good democracy can be. I was once threatened with arrest for handing out leaflets, and on a separate occasion, for doing street theatre at Speakers. Well, we did throw a lot of flour around to represent radiation. This was during the summer of 1974, while I was involved in the London Greenpeace campaign against French bomb tests in the Pacific.

Speakers corner regulations say No leafleting. So on later occasions when some of the group engaged in speaking at the Corner we would point out this bylaw, but point out that it would be perfectly legal to hand over the leaflets we had with us on the other side of the park railings. Over the last couple of years I have noted the number of publications sold, and leaflets handed out at Speakers Corner at the start and finish of demonstrations. We are criminals all ! In her autobiography "Living my life" Emma Goldman described Speakers Corner as the Most Difficult Place she ever spoken at.

But what about the published word? Another one of my experiences was in 1983, at Oslo Airport, just at the end of my first flight. I was called into a room and strip-searched, before being allowed into the country. After I was told I could go, and was dressing myself again, the guy who had conducted this procedure walked to the corner of the room and started very ostentatiously to wash his hands. This says something about the official mind - do the dirty work and then just wash your hands of it.

The next day I met and helped out a couple of Sami film makers. A few days later I just missed sitting through the raid upon Ikkevold ( Nonviolence ), the periodical of FMK - Folkerisning Mot Krig, which is the Norwegian section of the War Resisters International. The paper was raided for publishing information about a secret and illegal ( under Norwegian law ) US spy base. This was information that was based upon public information that was available in Sweden.

This was the first time that a Norwegian newspaper had been raided since WW2 and was the subject of a major debate within the Folkting ( Norwegian parliament). A series of trials took 12 years to complete - all concerned were found Not Guilty. As a result of this and the other raids that took part at the time, one of the Ikkevold editors ( Tormod ) had a nervous breakdown and jumped off a bridge. He survived, but his marriage broke up, and he shall always be disabled as a result of his fall. Tormod took the police to court for causing his nervous breakdown, and won a sum of circa Â£4,000 in compensation.

## **A Police Raid in Denmark**

It was in 1987 that I sat through a police raid in Denmark. I was staying at the time with some friends in an old farmhouse within the Jutland countryside, which had a 100 metre dirt track to it from the road. To get from the bus involved a 15 minute walk from the nearest village, along an unlit road, with a nice cold wind blowing at one from across the fields. Two of my friends at this house were involved in the production Ekomedia, which was an alternative newspaper. It was a Saturday afternoon, and we were watching a video movie.

The dogs started barking and Peter went out to find out what they were barking at. They were good guard dogs. The dogs continued to bark and Otto went out to find out what was going on. The next thing I saw was a guy who walked past the window in the yard, and into the house, passing me and going straight for the kitchen. What went through my mind was that he was not dressed like anyone in the house might associate with. Otto came in with another guy and said: "I'm sorry about this Martyn. This is inspector Hansen from the Glostrup police, and he has a warrant to search the place."

So Otto made another pot of coffee as we talked with Inspector Hansen, while the other 10 cops searched the place. They took away all of the typewriters, and 4 large paper rubbish sacks with the motto "Hold Danmark Rent" (Keep Denmark Clean ) printed on the side of them. It turned out that the

raid was in relation to an investigation that they were conducting about a firebomb attack that had taken place on a Shell gas station in Copenhagen. The story had been covered in Ekomedias, and the cops were looking for any communications that might have been made about this attack.

While the house was being searched we continued to watch the rest of the movie - coffee cups in hand. What else can you do while a police raid is going on around you ? For some obscure reason that I have never worked out, the police automatically assume that those who report things in the Anarchist press must be involved in the event they are reporting. They seem surprised that one can learn of illegal activities from just reading the daily newspapers, or by having no relationship with those one might be writing about.

Some hours later we said good bye to Inspector Hansen, as one would say goodbye to his friends. After that we went back into the house to watch the sport on the television, while Otto passed on news about the afternoon's events with various friends and comrades on the phone. In a subsequent newspaper story Inspector Hansen described his investigation as a fiasco. Later on the police had to pay compensation for a "wrongful raid", which after paying lawyers fees made a 1,000 Krone ( £100 ) profit for my friends.

During the raid I had several of my own documents taken away - though they were returned to me 10 days later as of no interest to the investigation. I had to visit the local police station to pick them up, which in turn prompted the question about what I was doing in the country? All I wanted to do just then was collect my things, and get out of the place.

As an aside - Bent is a very common 1st name in Denmark. Danish Phone books also give/gave the occupation of the person listed, and so it was easy to find a Bent Policeman listed. Another fine example of misdirected information work ?

If I were to state that this raid left me in a very scared frame of mind, then you would just be thinking understatement. It is not what one goes on that is scary, but the uncertainties that go through ones mind at the time. If you ever go through such an experience yourself, then take a tip from me. Talk it over with someone who knows the law in the country, and who is a good friend too. My mate Gordi helped me a lot that way at the time.

As an observation - sharing an experience with a cop who has the same 1st language and cultural references seems less scary than dealing with a foreign police force that don't. There is a longer and funnier version to this account, but it is best told over a pint or two - your round ! I'd also like to tell it as an oral history piece. Anyone want to get me drunk some time ?

In dealing with the police we should also remember that sometimes they are on our side. There is a story about a policeman who went into the SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace)office some 20 years back. This cop purchased some 20 smiling sun "nuclear power - no thanks" stickers. It turned out that he was just about to go on the police presence at a Scram demo. Of course the cops could not show any "official support" for the aims of the demo, but he and a lot of the police escorts fully agreed with the aims of the demo. So they put the smiling sun stickers on the inside of their caps.

At the time SCRAM was working to stop a nukiller reactor being built at Torness, some 30 miles to the East of Edinburgh. I was involved in the Torness Alliance, and was on a 10,000 strong demonstration, and 2,500 people occupied the site in 1979. For the full story of what occurred - see back copies of Peace News for that period. I was also told that the local police station used to have leaflets against the reactor being built held under their counter. Not that I can verify this fact. You just have to take my word for what I was told at the time.

There is a related story about 30 people that were arrested at Torness, and held in a police station in Edinburgh. When the police refused to release a couple of them for refusing to give their names, the rest of the group held an occupation of the police cells. This story is worth a whisky chaser.

## The 14



At one stage I shared a flat with Paul Seed, who was one of the BWNIC (The British Withdrawal for Northern Ireland Campaign ) 14. The BWNIC distributed leaflets to soldiers about the situation in Northern Ireland, and gave out details about the various ways in which soldiers might legally get out of the army, and the various pitfalls that they might face by taking a variety of other options e.g. desertion, or faking being gay.

For this 14 members of the campaign were put on trial at the Old Bailey, for conspiracy to break the Incitement to Disaffection Act, 1934. The act is aimed at stopping individuals from trying to "seduce soldiers from their allegiance to the crown". One of the defendants was Tenebris Light, who went on to found the gay publishing house Brilliant Books. His classic remark at the trial was in a very camp voice : "I have never tried to seduce a soldier in my life."

This was way back in 1975, and at the time it was the longest political trial in British legal history. The 14 defendants were found Not Guilty. The trial ended on December 10th 1975 - Human Rights Day. Every year since then there has been a party held by one of the defendants to mark the day and the outcome of the trial.

During September 1974 I answered the front door and was greeted by two gentlemen, and the classic line: "Good evening, we're police officers. We understand from our colleagues in Luton that a Mr Seed lives here." As luck would have it Paul was not in at the time, and I had not seen him for a couple of days. This was a very strange experience, as I seemed to be at the receiving end of the classic nice guy/nasty guy approach.

The next day I found out that they were Special Branch and had intended to charge Paul, for the crime of handing leaflets out to soldiers, as a part of a campaign to get the military out of Northern Ireland. My friend Albert Beale also had his flat raided as a part of the pre-trial investigation.

He woke up in bed with a friend, only to find the two gentlemen as mentioned above, standing at the foot of the bed with a crowbar in hand. I'll not say that this situation frightened me, but it did leave me feeling very nervous. Sometime during the week that followed I came upon a carton in the living room, which contained various documents that the two afore-mentioned gentlemen would have just loved to know about. A visit to the paper (recycling) bank over the next couple of weeks would have been of interest to these two gentlemen too.

I will not go into a full account of the trial or the BWNIC campaign. You can find information about it in copies of Peace News for that period. I also have had a very long involvement with Peace News, which was founded in 1936, and has also been taken through the court on a number of occasions for its radical publishing activities.

I was also involved with a local radical publication - Fly on the Wall. This had the byline: "Richmond and Twickenham's other scandalous rag". This was a fun periodical to be involved within. I also contributed to the Crouch Ender, which was a local satirical periodical in North London, which deserves a long article upon at some later stage.

## **On Law**

As a result of all these activities, and my involvement with other publications and organisations that have also been raided, I can now talk very learnedly about legal issues, such as the libel laws. I was involved in the Greenpeace (London) group during the period 1973 - 1985. During this period I spent most of my time working on the issue of nukiller bomb tests, and also helped to pioneer the work against Nukiller Power.

At one stage I was engaged in correspondence with Petra Kelly, who went on to found the German Green Party. The group involved itself in campaigning against the Arms Trade, toxic waste, Sami and Australian Aboriginal land rights, etc. It was always one of those groups that was very good at taking up issues which most people did not know existed. At the end of 1984 I drafted the text of a leaflet, which came out of a remark in a pub after one of the group meetings.

This leaflet was used on the first anti-Muck demonstrations that took place outside of one of their joints in the Strand in London in the winter of 1985. This was a leaflet entitled: Macdonald's - the sawdust people i.e. Sawdust from what is upon the butchers floor, from trees that were cut down for cattle ranching, & the nutritional value of the 'food' they sell.

The group got a very upset letter from the company lawyers about this, but they did not pursue the matter at the time. After I had left the group it produced the MuckD factsheet, which resulted in the Mclibel case. The rest of this story is very well documented, which you can look up on the Mcspotlight website. [www.mcspotlight.org](http://www.mcspotlight.org)

This website also contains a brief history of the Greenpeace (London) group, and the text of a factsheet that I once wrote about the advertising agencies which are involved in military recruitment within the UK. This factsheet needs to be updated, but I don't think that I am the right person to do it, as I think it is best approached with fresh eyes.

There is a class basis in which military recruitment is done. My analysis is that present MOD recruitment would seem to take the 3 following approaches : the good citizen, look at the humanitarian work we are doing, or more displays of guns and aircraft.

One MOD recruitment Cd rom that was produced a couple of years back looked like a cross between the movie "Star Ship Troopers", and a humanitarian help organisation promotion about all the good work that they had done in ex-Yugoslavia.

From all of these experiences I would always advise that in putting together any story or factsheet, it is always worth quoting existing sources, while making observations upon the facts, and then raise questions. Comment without comment upon published facts is how you can land up in a libel case, even if what you say is TRUE ! The same holds true within any political debate. You can loose political struggles if you don't get the factual sources of your arguments right.

## Some Afterthoughts


Writing this article has been one of the most difficult things that I have ever done. Writing the above accounts has been a very straight forward thing to do. It is more a question of trying to put words to the thoughts and feelings that it has left me with. It is also to do with feelings about exposing myself and people I care about to people that I don't know. Having regular contact with Peace Movement and Human Rights activists, many of whom have spent time in jail for their activities, has helped to frame my world view.

Active involvement in more campaigns than I could ever list, picketing many embassies on a wide range of issues, and walking more miles on marches than I could ever give a figure to, also help me understand why many activists suffer from "burn out". Activism can have a high emotional and physical cost, which many people find they are unable to sustain. It is true to say that many activists are involved because of a political commitment, it is also true to say that most people are involved because of a feeling that "something needs to done" about social injustice.

I also wonder about the kind of interest that people might have in me that might result from the accounts given above ? I have never tried to write an autobiography, and maybe this is the best I might ever do. So enjoy it for what it is. In writing this I have also become aware of other stories that I should also write up at some other time, but there is only so much that one can do at a time.

Many activists never write up their experiences, which are often unique. As information workers we should look for gaps in our collections for which no documentation exists, and actively go out and collect it.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. The Social Value of the Local Neighbourhood Library

By Jonathan Rutherford

### Introduction

On 7 March 2002, the Liberal Democrat controlled Education and Libraries Committee of the London Borough of Islington made a decision to close the Arthur Simpson Library (ASL). This decision was subsequently ratified in a full Council meeting. In July the Campaign to Save the Arthur Simpson Library began proceedings to take the Council before a judicial review over its failure to consult the public. The response of the Council was to claim that no final decision to close the Arthur Simpson Library had been taken and that a consultation exercise would begin. A final decision would be taken by the Council's Executive Committee on 28 November. This document is the Campaign's submission to that exercise.

The aim of the Campaign is to keep open a publicly owned, accessible to all, neighbourhood library in Tollington, staffed and resourced by the LBI. The campaign has undertaken research to back up its assertion that small neighbourhood libraries have a vital role to play in today's information society. Based on this evidence it opposes the Council's plan to link the building and resourcing of the new public library (which will be a part of City and Islington College's new Lifelong Learning Centre in Blackstock Road) with the closure of the ASL. It argues that the Council should separate the two issues. If a decision about the future of the ASL is to have longer term strategic meaning, the Council should engage in a proper public consultation exercise (see below), undertake a social impact assessment of its closure, and explore alternative sources of financing. The Campaign argues that if the decline in library use (which is a national problem) is to be reversed, the Council needs to rethink its service from the user's point of view.

The Campaign has significant local support. It stood a candidate in the Local Council elections in May 2002 and won over 400 votes, coming in fourth behind the three elected Labour candidates who directly benefited from the Campaign. 4500 people have signed a petition calling on the Council to save the ASL. Local schools, nurseries and community centres have sent letters of support. A public meeting in the ASL of over 130 people, part of the consultation exercise, unanimously rejected the Council's plans to close the library. The Campaign has the active support of the local MP, Jeremy Corbyn. On a wider level the Campaign has attracted considerable sympathy and interest from the local press (including an article in the Big Issue) with editorial support from the Islington Gazette. Authors of national and international repute such as Nick Hornby, Anne Fine, Sue Gee, Terry Pratchett, Michael Morpurgo, Brian Patten, Doris Lessing and Clare Rayner have written to give their support. Over the last seven months the Council has failed to respond to this widespread and heartfelt concern with a convincing and reasoned argument for closing down the ASL.

### The Consultation Exercise

The Campaign wishes to draw attention to the flawed nature of the Council's consultation exercise. A letter drawn up by the Campaign's solicitors Allen & Overy, setting out best practice for public consultation exercises, was ignored by the Council. The Council's exercise has involved a minimum effort to solicit local opinion, and has fallen far short of acceptable standards.

The over reliance on a single questionnaire delivered to each house in an area with one of the highest

levels of multiple occupation in London, has resulted in large numbers of residents failing to receive a copy. This practice contradicts the Council's own declared intention to deliver a consultation leaflet to Islington residents who live within 3/4 of a mile of either the existing or proposed library.

The cover of the questionnaire is misleading and fails to alert the reader that it concerns the future of the Arthur Simpson Library. The wording of the questionnaire and the choices offered to people have aroused widespread indignation. There is a general perception that the questionnaire is biased in favour of the Council's original plan to close down the ASL and that completing it will merely affirm this intention.

The Council has conceded that there have been serious problems, but have only been willing to extend the deadline from Monday 6 October to Friday 10 October. On the 6 October the Council reported that returns of the questionnaire were approximately 220. This small number contrasts sharply with the high level of public interest over the future of the ASL and suggests that the Council's consultation has completely failed to engage with people's concerns.

### **LBI's intention to close down the ASL**

The Arthur Simpson Library is situated in Tollington Ward in the London Borough of Islington. The Government's 2000 index of multiple deprivation places the ward in the top 6% of the most deprived wards in England. It has one of the lowest levels of secondary level educational attainment and an unemployment rate of 9.2%. It is part of the Finsbury Park regeneration scheme and there are two Sure Start schemes in the area. The library is a significant cultural and educational resource in the neighbourhood.

The Council has sought to legitimise its intention to close the library by citing the trend in falling issues and visits. This fails to take into account the general national decline in library use and in particular, the cuts in the opening hours of the ASL. Research has proven that cuts in opening hours and varying opening times reduces the number of library visits. Figures from the Council's Public User Survey in 1998 show that the Arthur Simpson library has more users who are under 14 and 75+ than some other Islington libraries, is more highly regarded in terms of resources, has the best layout, and does not have the poorest use. Declining use of ASL amongst local schools has been partially caused by the loss of children's librarians over the years - a trend reinforced by the recent restructuring of staff which is consolidating dependence on part time and agency staff. LBI's Libraries 2001 Annual Plan notes that the National Curriculum has put pressure on schools, marking a general falling off of visits to Islington Libraries (p.57).

Attempts to justify the closure of the ASL by citing the decline in issue figures and visitor numbers fail to account for the social value of the library. This point is central to the argument put forward by the 2002 Audit Commission Report, Building Better Library Services (2002). The use of statistical arguments in isolation, to justify closure, is a narrow and instrumental assessment of how a library is used. Its intangible value as a source of social cohesion, neighbourhood identity and aspiration are discounted. Professor Robert Usherwood of Sheffield University's Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society has stated "it is our view that issue figures and visitor numbers do not always tell the whole story about the value and impact of the library service."

### **Effects of Closure**

Closing a library is a difficult decision and requires forethought, and an assessment of the likely impact. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's over-arching policy on library closures is that "service changes, including closures, are acceptable where they form part of an overall review of services that will result in an improved and modernised service". The Council took advantage of an opportunity offered by City and Islington College for the development of a new library without foresight and with no thought to the strategic development of the library service in the borough as a whole. No research has been undertaken on who is going to use the new library, nor on its impact on the Central Library, situated on the other side of Highbury Fields.

Closure of the ASL will leave the area and its users without access to a public library. The Select

Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Third Special Report (2000) recommends that: any standard for the location of libraries should be linked specifically to modes of transport and in particular to measures of the quality of public transport provision. We further recommend that the standards as finally issued should require authorities to assess the community value of individual libraries, a value which goes beyond internal definitions of user satisfaction, even if this community value is not readily susceptible to statistical analysis.

This reference reiterates the Campaign's argument about the problems of relying too heavily on statistical analysis to make social policy. The Campaign questioned 380 regular users. They go once, twice, five times a week. What would they miss most about the Arthur Simpson Library? 69% said the fact it was a local and accessible library resource. How do they feel about travelling to Blackstock Road? 20 said they would go. 294 (77%) would NOT go. The Council, in making its original decision to close the ASL, not only failed to undertake an appropriate consultation exercise, it made no attempt to seek independent expert advice, commission a social audit, or undertake an impact study on the effects of the ASL's closure on the local area. Nor did it make any attempt to explore other sources of finance or partnerships. It's argument about the new library being a replacement for the ASL demonstrated a lack of local knowledge and, more generally, a failure to understand the social geography and culture of library use which consistently point to the importance of local neighbourhood libraries.

The Campaign would draw to the attention of the Council a study by the Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society called Access to Public Libraries which examined the impact of library closures on local neighbourhoods.<sup>5</sup> It found that : closure has a significant impact on library users. An average of one in five may be denied access to the service altogether after the closure of their local library; young children are likely to be worst affected. Up to six out of ten may be prevented from using a public library service by the closure of their local library; continued access to the service is facilitated if there is an alternative library in a centre to which people already go for other reasons; teachers, parents and library staff all agree that children are severely disadvantaged without access to a local library.

The research identified the value of a local library service: it provides a distinctive value to its users which goes well beyond its value as a source of books and information; it gives its users a sense of worth, makes them feel they belong to something important, and encourages a sense of community; it provides a therapeutic function, helping reduce the incidence of boredom, loneliness and depression; it is an irreplaceable resource for children to learn reading and information seeking skills which schools cannot replace; the contribution of the local library to community life and individual well being is far reaching, distinctive and irreplaceable. In the light of this evidence, users of the ASL, in particular school children, are unlikely to use the new library in Blackstock Road. The closure of the ASL will deprive the communities in the neighbourhood of a public library, and effectively disenfranchise thousands of Islington residents from the Council's library service. This fact the Council acknowledges. The impact on the immediate area will be a form of blight on local culture and learning which will add to social deprivation, undermine efforts to improve educational attainment and hinder the implementation of policies associated with life long learning and Sure Start.

Why would the Council create this state of affairs? The new library will require more money. The ASL is the cheaper option. Financially it makes no sense. The Council has failed to provide evidence that the new library in Blackstock Road would be more effective as a service, or would reverse the general decline in library use, or that it is part of any longer term thinking. No research has been undertaken. The decision is based on hazarding a guess and the promise of a prestigious flagship development. It is justified by a rather general idea about the relationship between the informal learning undertaken by individuals in libraries, their possible entry into formal education, and the contribution of this process to community development and regeneration.

## **Learning, Regeneration and Community Development**

The Government's publication Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries , states that combating social exclusion is one of its highest priorities and that "few [organisations] are ... as well placed as public libraries to generate change". The Campaign recognises the diverse range of communities and needs in the local neighbourhood and beyond. It is committed to the idea of the

strategic development of libraries in the Borough as part of the Council's broader policies of economic regeneration and facilitating learning and education. The Campaign argues that community development is best achieved by "bottom up" initiatives, local neighbourhood libraries, and building on existing provision. Neighbourhood libraries provide a vital role in fostering a neighbourhood's sense of cohesion and identity. Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) demonstrate that a local building-based library has a distinctive value to a community which cannot be replaced either by a replacement mobile library or an alternative branch in another neighbourhood.

The campaign believes that a significant element in creating greater levels of social inclusion will be people's ability to make connections with others in a variety of appropriate media. Deprived communities are characterised by close local ties, but relatively few links to society beyond their neighbourhoods. Deprived communities are information poor, and have a fragile connection to the political process and limited access to the employment market. The economic and social development of such communities is facilitated by their establishing wider links beyond their local neighbourhoods that integrate them into social networks. The development of these social networks is reliant upon individuals (particularly children and young people) achieving increasing levels of cultural and social capital (what you know and whom you know). These forms of capital are the prerequisites for new associations that enable participation in the democratic process and improved employment opportunities. Without them individuals have limited opportunities in the service and knowledge economies, and for social mobility in general. In this context, achieving appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding, and having the ability to find and evaluate information take on increasing significance. Any strategy for developing the Borough's library service must ask what is the most effective way of achieving this kind of social development.

Unlike other public services, local libraries are able to reach into and gain the loyalty of a diversity of communities within a neighbourhood. They are ideally placed to establish themselves as centres of information dissemination and informal learning. It is a myth that libraries are principally patronised by the educated middle classes. A study of Sheffield libraries undertaken by the CPLIS concluded there was a "very high value placed on the use of the library as a social resource, particularly in communities with a higher than average incidence of social and economic deprivation." The Select Committee's Sixth Report stated: "public libraries are one of the most accessible resources for the unemployed and those seeking a change of employment for information on skills training and educational and job opportunities."

The Council has made much of the new library being "bigger and better" than the ASL which currently lacks access to the internet. In believing that hi tech is unproblematically better than low tech this perspective fails to understand the way people use the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their impact on social and economic relationships. The distribution and take up of new ICTs reflect existing patterns of deprivation and disadvantage. Simply introducing technology alone does not create greater fairness or the more equitable distribution of employment opportunities and life chances, nor does it necessarily increase levels of democratic participation. There are limitations to the use of new technologies. As Tina Poulon, senior manager for group training at PricewaterhouseCoopers has argued, "just putting materials on the web doesn't mean people are going to learn." The successful use of the new ICTs has to take into consideration the social relationships within which they are embedded and utilised.

Research by the CPLIS entitled Low Achievers Lifelong Learning found that around three quarters of those with recognised qualifications used a PC. Around three quarters of those without did not. The library is an important place for those without recognised qualifications to connect with the information society. However it requires the fostering of good relations and an environment which recognises the negative feelings and low self-esteem many without formal educational qualifications associate with learning. The emphasis on targets, statistics and performance indicators when formulating social policy obscures these basic human feelings and predicaments. It also fails to recognise that the pleasure in browsing through books in the intimacy and familiarity of a local library is highly significant in enabling people to gain confidence in learning. In this context, and with appropriate and available help and information, the new ICTs have a role to play in promoting wider social networks.

## **The Future of the ASL**


The ASL with strong roots in the local communities of the neighbourhood is ideally placed to form part of a wider strategy of learning and cultural activities and information dissemination. Small, local neighbourhood libraries are not an anachronism left over from the past. They are the foundation on which to build inexpensive, locally driven, "bottom up" strategies for connecting individuals to the wider world of culture, formal education and the broader social networks which will facilitate social, cultural and economic opportunities. It is quite feasible for the LBI to initiate a genuinely radical approach to the library service in tune with its beliefs in neighbourhood democracy and empowerment.

The Campaign urges the Council to de-link its proposed new public library in Blackstock Road from the future of the ASL, and delay the decision about its future. Instead the Council could undertake a meaningful public consultation which includes a social audit of the library's use, an impact assessment of its closure, and research into the feasibility of finding additional funding and the possible multi-use of its building.

The ASL is in a regeneration area which makes it a suitable recipient of funds from a variety of sources: the Single Regeneration Budget, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Sure Start. The Council could investigate using a percentage of the revenue costs of the new library to keep open the ASL.

It could follow the lead of the London Borough of Lambeth and the London Borough of Croydon who jointly fund the Upper Norwood Library, and enter negotiations with Haringey Council to share the cost of the ASL. The ASL has a significant number of users who are Haringey residents.


To explore the full range of possibilities would require the employment of a consultant on a short term contract or the designation of an employee of the Library Service to draw up a report. The Campaign believes that the debate around the proposed closure of the ASL has created an opportunity for the Council to explore innovative approaches to the use of local, neighbourhood libraries. If the Council has the political will it can find a solution and keep open the Arthur Simpson Library.

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# Information for Social Change



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## ISC 16. The USA PATRIOT Act and American Libraries

by Robin Rice

Ambrose Bierce, in his entry under Patriotism in his Devil's Dictionary (1881-1906), wrote: "In Dr. Johnson's famous dictionary patriotism is defined as the last resort of a scoundrel. With all due respect to an enlightened but inferior lexicographer I beg to submit that it is the first."

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 was rushed through Congress and signed into Law by President Bush by the end of October. Although it usually appears in lower case, the name is an acronym: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism . The only Senator to vote against the bill was Russ Feingold, a Democrat from Wisconsin-the same state which produced Senator Joe McCarthy, the originator of the Cold War era witch hunts, whose style of persecution is now infamously known as McCarthyism.

The events of September 11th have put patriotism back in fashion in the US, as the midterm elections last month--which brought in Republican majorities in both houses of Congress--showed. The majority of Americans seems to crave security in the face of potential terrorist threats, and are willing to give up some of their freedoms to attain it. But American civil libertarians were quick to point out the dangers posed by giving government agencies broad new powers from the start. The same day that the Bush administration submitted the PATRIOT bill to Congress, 24 September, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other groups released a public statement, In Defense of Freedom at a Time of Crisis. It seems to have fallen on deaf ears in Washington, D.C.

The Patriot Act has many disturbing anti-democratic features, under the auspices of fighting the war on terror. However, the Bush administration was trying to get Congress to pass some key features even before the September 11th attacks, with the intent of modernising wiretap and surveillance laws for electronic communication, and to give law enforcement greater authority to conduct searches of property for criminal investigations. It allows the Attorney General (i.e. John Ashcroft) to detain non-citizens at will (which of course happened to up to 2,000 immigrants after 11 September, many of whom are still in custody with no charges against them). It also permits the barring or deportation of immigrants based on their speech or affiliation with certain groups, even groups that have no connection to terrorist activity. It also expands the government's powers to conduct electronic surveillance, and to obtain any business, medical, or student records of individuals. However, it is the Act's affect on libraries which will be explored here.

When I attended the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin in the early 1990s, the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Manual was required reading. I have always associated the field of librarianship with the defense of the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution, which protects individual's freedom of speech and citizens' right to assembly, and the freedom of the press. Library policies therefore tend toward this Liberal tradition, in terms of allowing public groups to book meeting rooms in library buildings, speaking out against censorship and book banning, and protecting patron's confidentiality in terms of their reading behaviour. Intellectual freedom, expressed not only as the freedom of expression and opinion, but particularly as the freedom to read and be informed, is a creed built into the very profession of librarianship, taught alongside the rules of cataloguing and the art of conducting a reference interview.



Therefore, when the Patriot Act was passed, and its implications for libraries became clear, librarians began informing each other about the law, its requirements, and how it could be resisted. The mid-year American Library Association (ALA) conference in February, 2002 featured the Patriot Act, and the ALA's website is filled with advice for librarians on coping with FBI requests, the latest news, and related links, particularly by its influential Washington Office, and its Office for Intellectual Freedom. The ALA Council, a body elected by ALA's large membership, passed an official statement on 23 January, 2002, Resolution Reaffirming the Principles of Intellectual Freedom in the Aftermath of Terrorist Attacks, which includes the following unequivocal text, quoted from its own Policy 53.1.12, "Universal Right to Free Expression":

'The American Library Association believes that freedom of expression is an inalienable human right, necessary to self-government, vital to the resistance of oppression, and crucial to the cause of justice, and further, that the principles of freedom of expression should be applied by libraries and librarians throughout the world.'

So what exactly is the effect of the Patriot Act on American libraries? In a nutshell, the law lowers the barriers to the FBI's ability to get permission in the form of subpoenas, search warrants, and wiretap orders, to legally obtain individual library patron's records of any kind, i.e. to spy on library patrons whom it considers dangerous.

Under the new law, the FBI can obtain library search warrants from secret courts (known as FISA courts: created by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) which deal with cases of international terrorism or clandestine intelligence investigations. Unlike regular criminal search warrants, no evidence of wrongdoing is required for the warrant to be granted. Rather, the FBI need only show it has reason to suspect that a person is involved with a terrorist or a terrorist plot, or may have information relevant to a foreign intelligence investigation. Information gathered may be shared between domestic and foreign intelligence agencies. One 'limitation' of the law is that, when US citizens are involved, the investigation must not be based solely (but can be based in part) on First Amendment-protected activities.

Additionally, the law includes a 'gag order' so that libraries or bookstores that are served with a search warrant are not allowed to tell the patron or anyone else that their user records were obtained by the FBI, or to disclose the name of the 'target' to anyone. In this way the entire investigation is kept secret. They may consult with their legal counsel before complying, and request that the legal counsel be present during the actual search and execution of the warrant, but the library and its staff (or bookseller) must comply with the order. If the FBI gets permission to track patrons' use of the Internet in libraries, it is allowed to install special hardware or software on the library computers, or to seize computer or storage hardware.

Reasonable advice is given on the ALA website for how to cope with law enforcement visits. This includes training all staff to ask for identification if they are approached by an agent or officer, and to immediately refer them to a designated staffperson such as the library director, who will deal with all law enforcement requests. Counsel can be requested to be present, but with a search warrant the search may begin immediately. Staff should not answer questions out of the scope of the warrant, and should be present to ensure that records other than those explicitly allowed in the warrant are not read, taken or copied. And, perhaps the most subversive advice offered, is to simply not create or retain records that are not absolutely necessary for the efficient running of the library.

One of the reasons the library community was so swift to react to the passage of the PATRIOT Act is that they have been embattled with the FBI before. As part of the FBI's so-called Libraries Awareness Program during the 1980's, agents sought information on library patrons it deemed suspicious and encountered the wrath of librarians who publicised the program and raised awareness of the FBI's tactics to the public. This led to changes to most state's laws which explicitly granted protection of confidentiality of library patron's records.

So what are librarians so worked up about, anyhow? Are they fond of criminals and terrorists, or are they unpatriotic? There are at least three major reasons why librarians oppose the intelligence agencies' powers to snoop around their users' records. One of which, is that if they themselves suspect users of

criminal activity, they can and do report it to law enforcement agencies voluntarily. For example, a public librarian in Florida recognised the names of three patrons on the list of suspected hijackers of September 11th and notified the FBI, which then obtained computer records from the library.

A second reason, in part due to past experience with the FBI's Library Awareness Program, is the concern with the chilling effect on information-seeking when users are concerned that their privacy will not be protected. Although this is hard to measure, it is an entirely valid concern. The new powers granted to intelligence agencies and the secrecy surrounding their investigations may arguably undermine the public trust in libraries and librarians as gateways to information. Foreign nationals who are not native English speakers may have even more reason to be afraid, despite all that libraries have to offer them.

The third major concern of librarians has to do not with privacy rights, but with the right of access to government information, which is created with public funds and by definition is publicly owned. After "9-11", some information on government websites was removed due to concern over availability of information that might be useful to terrorists. For example, the International Nuclear Safety Center removed interactive maps from its site; the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission removed specifications for energy facilities from its website; and the Environmental Protection Agency removed risk management plans regarding the dangers of chemical accidents from its website. In addition, the Government Printing Office ordered Federal Depository Libraries to destroy a CD-ROM containing US Geological Survey information about water supply.

This information obviously has value to (non-terrorist) citizens such as those who live near energy facilities, scientists, and environmentalists, among others. How is the government balancing its duty to protect the public from terrorism with its duty to make information it collects public? The ALA Washington Office has lots of relevant questions about this. For example,

- Is bibliographic information about the removed information still available?
- Is anyone keeping track of what has been removed?
- Is the information being appropriately preserved-not just stored but accessible and retrievable?
- These decisions are being made-by whom? How? Under what criteria? They want the government's criteria to be discussed openly and for librarians to document the losses of how users are affected when access to information is denied.

Librarians are not the only group resisting the Patriot Act's adverse effects on freedom and democracy for American citizens. According to the ACLU, more than 30 towns and cities across the US have passed or are considering resolutions protesting repressive federal action against civil liberties since the Patriot Act came into law. For example, in Takoma Park, Maryland:


In addition to language instructing local law enforcement officials to "refrain from participating in enforcement of federal immigration laws," the resolution adopted by Takoma Park [in October, 2002] also calls for the repeal of all federal and state legislation that violates fundamental rights and liberties. The resolution also seeks details on the extent of electronic surveillance and the infiltration of political and religious activities in Takoma Park.

More good news is that in November, 2002, a federal judge has ordered the Department of Justice to process a request for information filed under the Freedom of Information Act by the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), the ACLU, and library and bookseller organisations, which would disclose information about the implementation of the Patriot Act so far.

Nevertheless, the Patriot Act appears to be only the tip of the iceberg, with regard to assaults on American's privacy by the federal government since 9-11. In addition to the birth of yet another intelligence agency, the Office for Homeland Security, the U.S. military is now home to the new Information Awareness Office (IAO), which is charged with developing a "large-scale counter-terrorism database," called "Total Information Awareness" (TIA). Located within DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), which developed the Internet, the IAO is headed up by Reagan-era counter-terrorism 'expert', retired Admiral John Poindexter, known best for masterminding the Iran-Contra arms deal-and lying to Congress about it. Not limited to terrorism suspects, the scope is everyone living in the

United States. The database design is to gather bits of information from a variety of sources, including transactional data (financial, medical, administrative, etc.), as well as biometric data, such as fingerprints, so that through data mining techniques, the unique attributes of terrorists may be singled out by Big Brother. The size of the database will be measured in petabytes (a thousand terrabytes, or one quadrillion bytes). Time will tell if civil libertarians can awaken the public's anger enough to stop such intrusive schemes from coming to fruition.

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## ISC 16. IFLA Conference 2002 : Part 1 - Raising awareness about the GATS and "Women's Issues"

By Ruth Rikowski

### Introduction

I was successful in winning one of the 17 UK CILIP First-Timers to IFLA awards this year, and so attended the IFLA 2002 Conference in Glasgow in August. This 2-part article focuses on how I achieved the objectives that my application was based on, as well as providing an overview on some of the other meetings that I attended. The article concludes with my overall impressions of the IFLA conference and a look towards the future.

Part 1 of this 2-part article focuses on how I achieved the objectives that my application was based on, namely to raise awareness about the GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services). It then considers the 'Women's Issues' meeting at the conference that I attended, along with some further reflections about gender inequalities, and some of the potential opportunities for the female information professional in the future.

### IFLA, the World Trade Organisation, the GATS, TRIPS, Libraries and Information

My application for funding was based on my wish to raise awareness about the GATS, which is one of the agreements that is being established at the World Trade Organisation (WTO, 1994), that could have serious implications for libraries and information. The other main WTO agreement that will have implications for information and libraries is TRIPS - Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights. TRIPS covers many different areas, such as patents and licenses, but copyright issues in relation to knowledge and information are the areas that are of particular concern for libraries. One can question, for example, the extent to which knowledge and information should be encapsulated within an 'intellectual property right', as opposed to the idea of information being open to all. In the future, concerns about TRIPS may well override current concerns about the European Copyright Directive amongst information professionals. Many other agreements are also being established at the WTO, such as the Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIM) and the Financial Services Agreement (FSA). Furthermore, the WTO incorporates a complex Dispute Settlement Process and tribunals operate in secret in order to settle disputes between member states. This may well lessen the capacity for nation states to be democratically accountable to their citizens. As Clare Joy, Campaigns Officer for the World Development Movement says:

By committing sectors to the GATS, governments are agreeing to tilt the balance of power away from themselves and their citizens and towards the needs of corporations. GATS will have an enormous impact on the ability of governments to pursue objectives in their service sector which conflict with the needs of companies trading those services. ( 2001, Information for Social Change , p.21)

Thus, once the GATS comes fully into effect, it will be virtually irreversible. Hence, the need to raise awareness about the GATS is urgent, given that on the current WTO timetable it is due to come into effect in 2005.

I started researching and writing on the GATS and its implications for libraries, about 18 months ago.

Some extremely good research and writing has been undertaken on the implications of the GATS for other public service sectors, such as health and education. Professor Allyson Pollock, the Chair of Health Policy and Health Services Research at University College London and Director of Research and Development at UCL Hospitals NHS Trust, for example, has undertaken some ground breaking research and writing on health. This included an article that she wrote for the Lancet, entitled How the World Trade Organisation is shaping domestic policies in health care. Thus, my aim was to undertake some research on the GATS and libraries. I discovered that Steve Shyrbman had undertaken some extremely good research looking at the impact of the GATS on public library provision in Canada and that other people in the library world, such as Paul Whitney, Frode Bakken and Fiona Hunt had written articles on the GATS. Both Paul and Frode subsequently spoke at the fringe meeting that I organised at IFLA. I also found out that various library associations and library bodies, such as IFLA itself, had clear concerns about the GATS. As it says on the IFLA website:

There is growing evidence that WTO decisions, directly or indirectly, may adversely affect the operations and future development of library services, especially in the not-for-profit institutions. (IFLA, 2001).

Furthermore, the Canadian Library Association says clearly that:

The privatization of libraries may result from the proposals for expansion of the GATS Agreement. (CLA, 1999)

Meanwhile, the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association (EBLIDA) in referring to the GATS on its website says:

It is essential that the library community is aware of these developments and can defend its interests. (EBLIDA, 2000)

However, no research and writing had been undertaken about the implications of the GATS for libraries in England. So, I am breaking new ground.

Indeed, far more research and writing needs to be undertaken linking the GATS to privatisation of many different services (160 different services are covered under the GATS) in general. Thus, my work can be seen to be one small contribution. This is necessary because the implications of the GATS are so far reaching and all-encompassing - it is about the liberalisation of trade in services. Its aim is to place various service sectors in the marketplace, so that they can be internationally traded as a commodity. This surely runs contrary to notions of the 'public good' and as IFLA notes "Libraries are a public good" (IFLA, 2001). So, my time at IFLA was one small attempt to draw peoples attention to all this.

My work on libraries and the GATS is now getting quite widely known. I edited a special issue of Information for Social Change on the theme of Globalisation and Information, which is available on the web at - <http://libr.org/ISC/>. I also participated in a BBC4 radio programme, You and Yours, which discussed the GATS (see my article in December 2001 issue of Managing Information for further information). Furthermore, I have given various talks on the subject, at places such as the Library Association itself (as it was then called), Sussex University and the London School of Economics. I have also written some shorter articles on the subject.

This includes a 2-part article based on my talk The WTO/GATS Agenda for Libraries in the Public Library Journal, Summer and Autumn 2002 editions, for example; and another abbreviated version in Focus: on International Library and Information Work, Autumn 2002. Going to IFLA provided me with an opportunity to build on all this work.

I stayed for the whole week at Glasgow and it proved to be an interesting experience. As well as raising awareness about the WTO/GATS agenda for libraries I also attended some other informative and interesting meetings.

**IFLA Fringe meeting - The profit virus: globalisation, libraries and education**

In order to be able to effectively raise awareness about the GATS at IFLA, I organised a fringe meeting on the subject. It was not possible to get on to the main IFLA programme - this is finalised well in advance. So, a fringe meeting seemed the obvious alternative, and also meant that the issues could be covered in some considerable depth.

The fringe meeting was entitled The profit virus: globalisation, libraries and education and was held at Glasgow University on 22nd August. The meeting was very successful; there were a good number of people there, from a variety of backgrounds and different nationalities, there was a stimulating debate and the people seemed to be very interested in the subject. It involved me in a lot of work - obtaining the speakers, booking the room, publicising the event etc. However, the result was very positive, which made it all very worthwhile. Furthermore, some important and influential people in the library and information international community attended. An Associate Professor in the Department of Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles attended, for example, as did an Associate Professor at Kota Open University, Kota, India. There was also someone from the Legislative Counsel of the American Library Association and representations from Scotland, which included someone from the National Library of Scotland, a Faculty Information Advisor from the University of Aberdeen and a Subject Librarian from the University of Glasgow. The speakers at the meeting were:

Steve Rolfe, Chair of World Development, Scottish Committee : 'An overview of the General Agreement on Trade in Services - the beginning of the end of public services?'

Paul Whitney, Chief Librarian, Burnaby Public Library, British Columbia, Canada; IFLA representative to the WTO Seattle Ministerial; past president of the Canadian Library Association and member of the IFLA Copyright and Other Legal Matters Committee : 'International Trade Treaties and Libraries: a Canadian perspective'

Dr. Glenn Rikowski, University College Northampton : 'The Woodhead Federation? The business takeover of schools'

Frode Bakken, President of the Norwegian Library Association and Co-ordinator of EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association) WTO Working Group : 'Downsizing free public services: means or ends of global trade policies?'

Anneliese Dodds, Edinburgh University : 'The GATS and higher education: consultation or obfuscation?' - with particular reference to Scotland

Ruth Rikowski, University of Greenwich, Book Reviews Editor for Managing Information , member of Information for Social Change and member of EBLIDA WTO Working Group : 'The WTO/GATS Agenda for Libraries' - with particular reference to public libraries in England.

Shiraz Durrani and Gill Harris also both spoke briefly. Shiraz is one of the founding members of ISC and also won one of the CILIP First-Timers to IFLA Awards. He spoke about Information for Social Change, and how it challenges the dominant paradigms of library and information work and some of the diversity work which he has been involved with. Gill spoke about LINK and how it connects with library workers in the third world. Gill is co-editor of Link-up: the newsletter for north-south library development . Both ISC and LINK are organisations that are in liaison with UK CILIP.

Thus, the programme provided both variety and depth. Steve provided an overview and a basic understanding about the GATS. Paul and Frode provided an international perspective focusing on libraries, information and trade agreements. Teresa Hackett, the Director of EBLIDA also spoke briefly about EBLIDA's current position in regard to the GATS and some of the work that EBLIDA plans to do in the future - and its concerns about the likely implications of the GATS for libraries. Glenn and Anneliese looked at education; Glenn focusing in particular on the recently passed Education Act in England and how this paves the way for a business takeover of schools, whilst Anneliese focused on higher education and the GATS, and looked in particular, at Scotland. I focused on public libraries in England and how they were being affected by the GATS.

There was a very positive response to the meeting, with 35 people attending. Lots of copies of my various articles and flyers were taken - altogether, throughout the whole week about 400 copies must have been taken (having also put various material out in the main information distribution point at the exhibition centre at IFLA). One of the articles that I photocopied and distributed was an article that appeared in The Big Issue the week before the conference about libraries and privatisation (Mackenzie, 2002). Jane Mackenzie, the News Reporter, and Deputy Editor (News) at the Big Issue was not able to come to my talk at the Library Association in March 2002 on The WTO/GATS Agenda for Libraries, but she contacted me asking for further information on the subject. Following on from this, she wrote the article for the Big Issue. This is now available on Rory Litwin's Library Juice website - 5:27 - August 22, 2002 at [http://www.libr.org/Juice/issues/vol5/LJ\\_5.27.html#2](http://www.libr.org/Juice/issues/vol5/LJ_5.27.html#2) (and is also in this ISC issue).

The only unfortunate aspect, as far as I was concerned, was that it was not really possible to convey a political message clearly enough at the meeting. It is important that the political dimension comes across and remains powerful, and that we are not left merely focusing on technical considerations.

### **Meeting on 'Women's Issues'**

I also went to the meeting on 'Women's Issues', which was part of the main IFLA conference. Issues about gender inequalities and feminism are areas that I have been interested in for many years. Unfortunately, despite the many years of struggle, many of these issues still remain unresolved, as is well known. In fact, in some ways it could be argued that life has become more difficult for women, as they endeavour to excel at both home and work - the 'superwoman syndrome', but often without adequate recognition and reward.

The 'Women's Issues' meeting at IFLA was entitled Women, Democracy and Participation in the Information Society. Various issues about the problems and barriers that women still face today were discussed, particularly in relation to information. Leena Siitonen, Chair of the IFLA Round Table on Women's Issues, now the Section on Women's Issues, for example, presented a paper written by Anne Goulding and Rachel Spacey at Loughborough University entitled Women and the Information Society: barriers and participation. Goulding and Spacey argue that we are moving from an 'Industrial' to an 'Information' society, but that in this new 'Information Society' there is a gender imbalance. They say that:

The ultimate aim of the information society is the empowerment of all its citizens through access to and use of knowledge, but there is concern that some people, including women, are more distant than others from the opportunities presented by the changes being wrought by ICTs. (Goulding and Spacey, p.2, 2002)

So, the information society is being divided into the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and women, particularly those in poverty, immigrant women and women with disabilities etc, are suffering in particular. Goulding and Spacey note that men in general use the Internet more than women. According to the UK National Statistics Office, 2001, 57% of men had used the Internet, whereas only 45% of women had. They also speak about the fact that men are louder and more vocal in their use of email and refer to:

...male monopolisation of discussion lists and bulletin boards and the flaming and harassment of female users by male users. (Goulding and Spacey, p. 4, 2002)

They conclude their paper by looking briefly at 'cyberfeminism', which is a philosophy that recognises that there are gender inequalities in the use of the Internet and cyberspace in general, and wants to try to change this situation for the benefit of women.

An interesting discussion followed after all the papers had been presented. However, although all the people seemed very amiable and were very concerned about gender injustice, I felt that they were not addressing many of the really crucial issues of the day (even though Goulding and Spacey did themselves address some really important issues). And that this is precisely the problem that women face. They are often encouraged to focus on relatively unimportant subjects, which means that then they will not be part of many of the main decision-making bodies and processes and will not be involved with making really

important decisions - i.e. they will become marginalised. These include decisions that are being made at places such as the WTO itself, at the European Commission and in various other large organisations. As has been well documented, despite the struggles that women have undertaken over many years, they are still discriminated against in many different ways. Furthermore, the pay differential that exists between the sexes seems to be as stark as ever. Tania Branigan reported in The Guardian on the findings of the Equal Opportunities Commission in June 2002, for example, saying that:

British women can celebrate 50 years of progress in the workplace, but still lack sufficient childcare, are concentrated in particular jobs, and earn on average 18% less than men... (Branigan, 2002, p.10)

Similarly, Jamie Doward noted in the Sunday Observer that:

...despite all the talk of closing gender gaps over the last few years, men still wear the trousers in the business world. (Doward, 2000, p.7)

Doward went on to note that a female FTSE 350 Director could expect to receive total earnings, including bonuses and share options, of £261,000, whereas her male counterpart could expect to receive a package of about £400,000. Furthermore, interestingly enough, Doward said that the 'patriarchal structure of the business world' might be quite unsuitable in the new knowledge-based economy of the future anyway. He argues that:

...the new knowledge-based economy places much greater emphasis on the need to create enduring working relationships between companies. More and more companies are sharing information, brands and personnel, calling for new management skills. (Doward, 2000, p.7)

Surely, then, this could present a great opportunity for female information professionals in the future. Finally, John Carvel reported in The Guardian of 4th December 2001, on a report that had then just been published by the Industrial Society, which showed that fewer than 10 women were executive directors in FTSE 100 companies and women were clustered at the lower levels of the management structure.

These, I feel sure, are all issues that the women's group needs to continually address. It might be particularly interesting to consider the role of female information professionals in the new knowledge-based economy and to also relate this to gender inequalities in cyberspace and cyberfeminism.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. IFLA Conference : Part 2 - Report on meetings and demonstrations attended, overall impression of the conference and a look towards the future

By Ruth Rikowski

### Introduction

In part 2 of this 2-part article I will focus on some of the meetings that I attended and the demonstrations that I saw. These included the meeting on Palestine libraries, the Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM) meeting, the 'Bridging the Digital Divide' brainstorming sessions with Kay Raseroka, the President-Elect of IFLA and the EBLIDA WTO Working Group meeting. The two demonstrations that I saw were the ProQuest Customer Forum and the Ebrary demonstration, and these will be considered. I conclude with some of my overall impressions of the conference and a look towards the future.

### Meeting on Palestine Libraries

On Monday 19th August I went to a meeting on Palestine Libraries, that was organised by Frode Bakken, the President of the Norwegian Library Association. The meeting was well attended. Someone gave a brief report about the situation in regard to Palestine Libraries, and the amount of devastation and destruction that there has been. However, the point about the difficulty of obtaining accurate statistics in regard to the devastation was also made. We then discussed what we could do about this from both within the IFLA framework and outside the IFLA framework. A list was then circulated where people could enter their names if they wanted to be included on an email list, in order to take these issues forward. Erling Bergan, Editor of Librarians Union of Norway agreed to take a co-ordinating initiative for a network of supportive librarians and he emailed round to everyone at the beginning of September, outlining what he had done so far. A website has now been set-up at <http://www.bibforb.no/lip/> with a few texts and links, which Erling will update once a month. The fact-finding mission is now in the hands of FAIFE (Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) - as was agreed at our meeting. We also decided to undertake some supportive actions for libraries in Palestine. This is still under consideration but Erling has asked initially for any further information and ideas on this matter. So, an optimistic beginning which can now be built on.

### Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM) Meeting

On Tuesday 20th August I attended the Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM) Update session, which was part of the main IFLA programme. The meeting was very well attended. Teresa Hackett, Director of EBLIDA (the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association) was one of the speakers and her talk was on The European Copyright Directive - update on national implementation. Denise Nicholson, from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, spoke about Copyright and developing countries: a South African perspective. I also heard Denise Nicholson speak on a similar theme at a 2-day conference in London that I attended earlier this year, which was organised by the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights. Denise spoke about the fact that copyright laws are not really a priority concern in South Africa, as there are many more pressing social concerns. This includes high unemployment, poverty, poorly resourced schools and libraries, high book prices and the spread of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, nearly 40% of the population are illiterate anyway. So copyright is a low priority

even though it determines what information South Africans have. A lack of education and information has also helped to spread HIV and AIDS, Denise Nicholson said. Many South Africans do not even have a telephone, let alone a computer - only 2 million actually have access to a computer. She concluded by saying that copyright laws need to take into account literacy problems and poverty and that if one remains illiterate how can one understand the copyright laws anyway! Paul Whitney, Chief Librarian, Burnaby Public Library, British Columbia, Canada, a member of the IFLA Copyright and Other Legal Matter Committee, IFLA representative to the WTO Seattle Ministerial and past president of the Canadian Library Association provided an update on libraries and international trade treaties, including information about both the GATS and TRIPS, and he also informed people about my fringe meeting.

### **'Bridging the Digital Divide' - a brainstorm session with Kay Raseroka, President-Elect of IFLA**

I also went to the 'Bridging the Digital Divide' brainstorm session with Kay Raseroka, the President-Elect of IFLA, which was about the theme that she has chosen for her presidential period. The session was extremely well attended. In pursuing its aims IFLA embraces 4 Core Values and each table took one of the themes and discussed it. The 4 Core Values are: freedom of access and expression; the importance of this freedom in social, cultural, educational, democratic and economic terms; the importance of high-quality library and information staff; and a commitment to the ideal that all IFLA members should be able to participate and benefit from the activities that IFLA undertakes. I joined the table with the Core Value on Equality issues, point 2, as this is something that particularly interests me. This Core Value is:

The belief that people, communities and organisations need universal and equitable access to information, ideas and works of imagination for their social, educational, cultural, democratic and economic well-being.

We each considered what work we could do ourselves to help to fulfil the core aim, what work the institution that we work in could do and what work IFLA could do. I spoke, once again, about my work on the GATS, and how the GATS could act as a barrier to equitable access to information. Each table took a couple of key points made from within the group, and reported back to everyone else at the meeting. Various conclusions were reached at the end of the meeting, such as the fact that IFLA needs to further raise its profile on the international stage. Also, that the delegates at IFLA should report back to those at the grassroots, so that they can become more aware of the work and core values of IFLA. Kay Raseroka said that she was very delighted with the overall level of discussion and the ideas that were put forward.

### **EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association) WTO Working Group Meeting**

Finally, I attended the EBLIDA WTO Working Group Meeting. Frode Bakken, the co-ordinator of the EBLIDA WTO Working Group and the President of the Norwegian Library Association called this meeting. Shortly before going to IFLA I formally became a member of this group and Teresa Hackett, the Director of EBLIDA, updated the website with my details. See [www.eblida.org/topics/wto/wto.htm](http://www.eblida.org/topics/wto/wto.htm) for further details. The following people were at the meeting - Frode Bakken, Teresa Hackett, Britt Mari Haggstrom (President of EBLIDA), Toby Bainton (Secretary of SCONUL, UK), Kjell Nilsson (Director of Royal Library Bibsam, Sweden), Paul Whitney and myself. Frode invited Paul because of his knowledge in the subject area - he cannot be a formal member of EBLIDA as he is Canadian! It was a very useful and productive meeting. First of all, we had an interesting discussion around the subject of the GATS in general, as well as outlining the work that had already been undertaken on this within the international library community. We considered whether we should have an ideological position in regard to the GATS (but decided against it, at least at this stage). We discussed a draft letter that will be sent to the European Commission on behalf of EBLIDA once everyone in the group is in broad agreement in regard to the wording of the letter. It expresses our concerns about the GATS and its likely implications for libraries. This will then become EBLIDA's official position, and will go on the EBLIDA WTO website. We also decided that we would see if EBLIDA could hold a pre-conference meeting on the GATS at next years' IFLA conference. Teresa Hackett has also arranged a meeting with the WTO itself - which others from EBLIDA can attend. This sounds like a good opportunity to have a meaningful discussion and to raise some of our concerns. We also considered how to build up other relevant strategic partnerships and

about how to divide up special responsibilities within our group. Britt Marie Haggstrom, for example, said that she would focus on the media and the GATS.

Finally, we also discussed the 2nd European Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture and Education that was due to take place at Brixen (Bozen-Sudtirol) on 17th-18th October 2002. The conference is entitled Globalisation of Culture and Education WTO and GATS: the implications of liberalising public services in the fields of culture and education . The aim of the conference was to look at globalisation and the WTO and to discuss the GATS and how it might affect museums, schools, colleges, libraries and culture in the Regions. The conference will assist in the drafting of a common position on the GATS negotiations for all Regions of Europe. The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is a political organisation of the regions of Europe and speaks for their interests at European and international level. Its mission is to bring together the regions of Europe and to allow them to act in the construction of Europe and European integration. See the website for further information at - <http://www.a-e-r.org/COMMUN/A214b8gb.html>. There are readings on different topics on the website - one section for GATS and Education, for example, another for GATS and Trade, and another for GATS and Libraries. In the GATS and Libraries section there is a link to Rory Litwin's libraries and GATS website which is available at - <http://www.libr.org/GATS/>. This website provides links to various articles on the web about the GATS and libraries, including links to articles by Paul Whitney, Frode Bakken, Fiona Hunt, Steve Shrybman, and myself. Frode Bakken is going to speak at this conference. This surely helps to show the significance that libraries now hold on the international scene.

### **ProQuest Customer Forum**

I went to the ProQuest Customer Forum given by Pro Quest at the City Inn, Glasgow on Tuesday, 20th August. They gave us a talk and a demonstration and also gave us some literature about ProQuest. Steven Hall, Senior Vice President and General Manager of ProQuest Information and Learning says:

ProQuest has no equal in the scale and variety of the digital scholarly content which it publishes and sells . (Hall, p.1, 2002)

Basically, the forum was about promoting the company's product and saying how good their product was. ProQuest also wanted feedback from others in the meeting about the product, presumably so that they can take on board any comments that seem particularly important and helpful in terms of helping to increase their sales. Describing the product in their literature ProQuest say:

ProQuest is your gateway to a world of electronic journal resources. It is a single, integrated platform that provides instant access to the full text of over 3,500 journals online and detailed indexing and abstracts for a further 3,500 journals. It is, quite simply, the largest academic research tool of its kind available (ProQuest, 2002, p.3).

However, as people such as Fox have pointed out, companies such as ProQuest are essentially about selling information. Questia, for example, is a similar company to ProQuest. It is an Internet company aimed at serving students in an academic environment, providing online information from books, encyclopaedias and journals in the humanities and social sciences for fees. Fox refers to Questia saying that it:

...sells information online directly to consumers the way amazon sells books online and the GAP sells clothes online. (Fox, 2001, p.1)

Therefore, I suggest that we should approach all such companies with caution.

### **Ebrary Demonstration**

Later I went to see a demonstration of Ebrary at the Ebrary stand in the main exhibition centre. They also gave me some literature. In one of the articles they gave me, written by Mike Letts, Letts refers to the product saying:

Ebrarian is a subscription-based service, designed specifically for libraries, that offers simultaneous, multi-user access to Ebrary's catalog of titles. (Letts, 2002, p.4)

Essentially, Ebrary takes a PDF file, applies various business rules to it and then makes it available. Publishers submit their PDF documents, which includes images, maps, books, periodicals and monographs to Ebrary for free and then charges users for further use of the documents. The Ebrary catalogue holds titles on a wide variety of subjects, such as history, psychology, medicine, literature, technology, economics and social sciences. Letts talks about how Ebrary is gradually building up its business and its customer base and about its charging mechanisms. He says:

...a student or casual Web surfer who enters the Ebrary catalog, either from the Internet or through the Ebrarian service, can view and read any titles for free. However, the reader who wants to copy, save or print any of the material will be charged on a per-page basis. (Letts, 2002, p.5)

Micropayments are being used to assist with the process of charging fees. Ebrary also has a client-side plug-in called InfoTools.

These demonstrations provided me with some useful information about the products and what these companies are essentially about, which was interesting. Essentially, these companies and others similar to them, are about making money out of information and placing information in the market place. Information is becoming a commodity. This fits in neatly with the WTO agenda.

### **My overall impression of IFLA conference**

I enjoyed meeting so many interesting people from a wide variety of different countries, particularly those that I had been contacting by email, as this provided me with the opportunity to meet them face-to-face. I also thought that the whole event was organised extremely well (for example, the efficient bus shuttle service that was provided from the station to the exhibition centre when the trains were not running). UK CILIP should be very much congratulated on this, and for ensuring that the whole event ran so smoothly and was so successful. Given the size of the event this was a particularly significant achievement.

However, I was disappointed in much of the level of debate and would have preferred it if copies of the papers had been made easily available prior to the papers being presented. Then, there might have been a better discussion in the meetings, as people would have had the opportunity to read the papers beforehand.

There also seemed to be a lot of 'hard-selling' going on. The name badges that all the delegates had to wear, for example, had 'EBSCO Information Services' on them. Many of the stalls and exhibits were about selling a product of one sort or another (not surprising really given that it costs £2000 to have a stall - who else other than profitable companies could afford this?) It is unfortunate that this price could not have been lowered, to enable a greater variety of different exhibits and viewpoints. Furthermore, much of the literature that was put out on the main information distribution point was of a selling/promotional nature, rather than providing delegates with real articles to read. It also seemed very much like many other library/information exhibition/conferences that I have been to, such as the Online Exhibition, Internet Librarian and the Library and Information Show. This I found to be somewhat disappointing as I had expected it to be something significantly different. Never the less, some of the stalls and exhibits were interesting and worthwhile and the international dimension certainly made it something quite different.

All in all, it was a worthwhile experience, and it was good to connect with so many people on the international stage. Furthermore, I did fulfil my mission - i.e. I did play some part in starting to raise awareness about the GATS in the international library and information world. Finally, one was certainly spoilt for choice in terms of the number and variety of meetings that one could attend on a wide range of different topics.

### **Conclusions and looking ahead**

In conclusion, attending the IFLA 2002 Conference proved to be a valuable experience, in terms of meeting library and information workers throughout the world, having the opportunity to raise an issue that is important to me and having the opportunity to attend a variety of meetings and discuss different topics. The conference also helped to provide me with new ideas about how to raise other important issues in the future. It was, in total, a unique experience.

However, I think the Conference could be improved in a number of ways. First of all, it would be helpful if it was less bureaucratic and if it was easier to speak on the main programme. It seems that the 'old boy network' still needs to be broken down more, in various ways. Secondly, it would have been good if there had been more opportunity to have a higher level of debate. This could be achieved in a number of different ways, such as having copies of the papers made readily available before they were presented and allocating more time for debate and discussion on the actual programme. Thirdly, the 'hard-sell' approach could have been lessened. This could be achieved by lowering the cost of a stall, for example, and having a greater variety of different exhibits. Whilst this would obviously mean that less revenue would be generated surely one of the central aims of IFLA is to bring together library and information workers from around the world, and from a variety of backgrounds? It is not intended to just bring together library and information workers that have, or might want to buy certain company products. This should surely be given further consideration for the future. Delegates could also have been more adequately informed about the main information distribution point prior to the conference. Then, perhaps, more delegates would have taken copies of their own articles and other material, and put these out in the information distribution point. This would have provided a good counter-balance to the amount of promotional material that was made available.

## **The GATS - looking ahead**

I want to build on the work that I have undertaken on the GATS and indeed, on what I achieved at IFLA in this regard. Being part of the EBLIDA WTO Working Group is very worthwhile in this respect. It gives me the opportunity to raise issues and concerns about the GATS and libraries and to be part of the EBLIDA WTO Working Group decision-making process. This means that I can now have a more formal voice on the international stage on these matters.

I also currently helped to organise a one-day event about the privatisation of UK public services and showing links between privatisation and the GATS, which was held at the London School of Economics on 16th November. It was run by ATTAC, London and is entitled Still at your service? The acronym 'ATTAC' is French but in English means - the 'Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens'. ATTAC looks for alternatives to the 'dogmatic ideology of neoliberalism' and campaigns on issues such as Third World Debt, the reform or abolition of the WTO and wants to 'recapture the space that has been lost to the financial world'. (<http://www.attac.org/uk/attac/html/about.vm>). At the one-day GATS and privatisation event there was a variety of speakers and workshops on topics such as education, health, libraries, the police, the tube, pensions, legal implications of the GATS and an overview on globalisation and poverty. For further information, see the ATTAC website at: <http://docs.attac.org.uk/twiki/bin/view/London/GATSAutumnConference2002>

Furthermore, Anders Ericson a freelance journalist and former librarian from Norway has read much of my work and is very interested in it and he recently came over to England to interview me about my work on the GATS and library privatisation. He also interviewed John Pateman about the work he has been doing as the Head of Libraries in Merton, on social exclusion in Merton. Currently he is undertaking further research and will shortly be writing 2 articles about these topics for a Norwegian library journal, entitled Bok og bibliotek (Book and Library) at <http://www.bibtils.no/bob/>.

Finally, Paul Whitney hopes to get the WTO/GATS agenda on to the main IFLA programme next year, and EBLIDA also hopes to hold a pre-conference meeting on the GATS at IFLA next year.

## **The Future**

I hope that in the future IFLA will be able to build on the good work it has undertaken on a wide variety of issues, and that it will be able to involve many different people from the library and information world

on the international stage in its work. Furthermore, I do hope that it will be able to retain and build on its fundamental principles and its 4 Core Values - they are all very worthwhile. They must not become subsumed under another agenda, such as the ever-increasing drive towards product promotion. I also very much hope that the GATS will be on next years' main IFLA programme in one format or another.

In regard to my own work, I hope (amongst doing many other things as well!) that I will be able to continue to raise awareness about the threat that our state-funded services are under from the GATS, focusing in particular on libraries, as I have described above. In this respect, it would be a great step forward if UK CILIP were able to pass a clear resolution against the GATS, or at least, make a statement expressing its concern about the possible implications of the GATS for libraries, in the same way that other library associations, such as IFLA, have done. There was almost unanimous support for such a resolution from the people that attended my talk on The WTO/GATS Agenda for Libraries at the International Group of the Library Association (as it then was called), meeting back in March of this year.

Thanks

I would like to express my thanks to a number of different people and organisations that have assisted me and offered me great support with all the work that I have undertaken on the GATS. I could not have made the progress that I have made without them. In particular I would like to thank Matthew Mezey, John Pateman, Glenn Rikowski, Frode Bakken, Paul Whitney, Shiraz Durrani, Gill Harris and Rory Litwin. In terms of organisations, I would like to thank, in particular, Information for Social Change, Aslib, UK CILIP, the International Library and Information Group of CILIP, the World Development Movement, ATTAC London, the Canadian Library Association, the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association and the Norwegian Library Association.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. IFLA, bullies and other monsters

By Shiraz Durrani

As I reflect on my experiences at IFLA, I recall the reasons I gave to CILIP for wanting to attend the IFLA Conference:

- Information for Social Change is organising a number of sessions on the theme of IFLA Conference;
- To represent Diversity Council point of view and establish links with others;
- The theme of the Conference is one on which I have written many articles; \* Establish connections with others for Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers.

At the same time, CILIP wanted to know in which areas of IFLA's work I was interested. I had indicated my interest in "Diversity, Equality, Social Exclusion, WTO and globalisation, alternative sources of information, empowerment of excluded communities...". All this was in the context of the Conference theme that carried the principles of "democracy, diversity, and delivery" - all three I am deeply interested in. I was also interested in finding out what the "leaders" of the library world would add to the needs-based approach we are developing and implementing in Merton. This report provides an opportunity to assess if IFLA met my expectations.

Getting started I had been well prepared for attending the conference. CILIP very thoughtfully organised a pre-conference meeting to teach the "first-timers", as we came to be called, on how to survive the week-long ordeal. It made you feel like a child going to school for the first time into the hostile world of bullies and other monsters. The theme of the conference may have been "democracy" but the sharp "class" divisions between those who had been attending the IFLAs for decades and us new comers were made painfully obvious. I wondered what I had let myself into: a mission impossible to wonder aimlessly in the presence of thousands of people who all know where to go for coffee and cakes, and me sitting all by myself not knowing how to order coffee. I was not disappointed by the IFLA organisers, either. Very helpfully they provided a label which I was supposed to carry around me saying I was a "First Timer" so that some kind old timers could rescue me every time I looked a little lost at the deep philosophy expressed by the old worthies. I did not see anybody carrying the label "tenth timer", but I may have been too dazed to look.

The process of registration revealed another hidden aspect of IFLA: the deep inroad that business had made in the work of IFLA. I was provided with a name badge, which said in big bold letters something like "ESCOM". I protested to the registration person: "Surely there is some mistake here - my name is not ESCOM". She very helpfully suggested that perhaps I could hide the ESCOM bit by covering it over with my name badge - which I promptly did.

### Two IFLAs

There are two IFLAs. One IFLA is, as the name suggests, an organisation of library organisations. Most of its members are associations. This of course means that a large part of its business is carried out as between organisations, years before IFLA meets, and usually behind closed doors. This is the rather hidden part of IFLA work and ideas of democracy and diversity tend not to be the guiding principles in many of the member organisations. CILIP itself has a rather opaque version of these principles. If IFLA is to have a real meaning to library and information workers (professionals?) in the UK, then this mist on

working with IFLA needs to be cleared and more transparency needs to be brought in.

The other IFLA, in contrast, is human, transparent, democratic and reflects world diversity. This is perhaps the most dynamic and living part of IFLA; it is here that the real future of IFLA belongs. Just as the UN needs to be transparent and needs to practice (as opposed to preaching) principles of democracy, so does IFLA if it is to become relevant not only to information professionals, but also to the communities and peoples on whose behalf the profession is supposed to work.

### **Some sessions**

Attendance at some of the sessions was a useful experience. Giving a CD-ROM with conference papers sounds a good idea and removes the necessity of having to carry tons of paper with you. But it also means that few people have had time to read or glance through papers in advance to see if they were really relevant to their needs. Perhaps a summary of all papers should have been included in the registration pack to allow for a quick look at themes being presented.

Alternatively, sending the CD-ROMs in advance of the conference would have ensured that those who attend the meetings are a little more aware of the issues under discussion. After all, the purpose of a conference is not to lecture or to be lectured at, but to have a meaningful debate on ideas and experiences. This, I felt, did not take place to the extent it should have. Having said this, many sessions were interesting, informative and creative. Some sessions that made an impression me (for the right or wrong reasons) included:

- The "public libraries; democracy, delivery and diversity" session was interesting for me for the simple reason that the talk "Public libraries in the United Kingdom" had little meaningful to say about the actual theme of the Conference: democracy, delivery and diversity and lacked details of what libraries in UK were doing to address democracy and equality. I had expected details of Stephen Lawrence Inquiry recommendations, Race Relations (Amendment) Act, Human Rights Act, the Equalities Standard, DDA, etc
- Women's Issues: "Women, democracy and participation in the information society". This provided a useful opportunity to hear about developments in an area where perhaps we have not developed many creative ideas and practices in the UK. Also good to meet some progressive women activists from around the world.
- Africa: "delivering information to the community in the new millennium: a challenge for librarians in Africa", together with the final session of the Africa section of IFLA provided a valuable opportunity to meet several friends from Kenya (including the Chair of IFLA Africa Section) as well as people from other parts of Africa. It was obvious that African librarianship needs to liberate itself from the colonial-imperialist mould it seems to be sitting in.
- Poster sessions provided an interesting insight into the reality of information work around the world. This section was in sharp contrast to the highly commercialised displays from the major companies who see IFLA as a vast source of profit. The posters session, on the other hand, represented grassroots, activist librarianship with themes like political conflict and Sri Lankan libraries; Library Service to Mobile users; Access to online resources in the developing countries (Cornell University); A for Accessibility (USA); International Friends of the Alexandria Library; Diversity through Exchange (USA); Mobile and Outreach Library Services in Thailand; Setting up an International Leadership Institute (USA); Virtual Libraries for Economic Development (Ghana); The PADDI Project (N. Ireland); training for a future (Iran); all worth a deep study, and there were many lessons for British librarianship. This should have been kept for the whole conference period and not removed by Thursday.

### **Some fringe meetings**

I found the fringe activities rather more interesting and relevant than the official programme. These included:

- The Information for Social Change (ISC) and LINK organised a fringe meeting whose theme was "The profit virus: globalisation, libraries and education". This well attended meeting heard speakers

from the World Development Movement, President of the Norwegian Library Association, the IFLA representative to the WTO Seattle Ministerial, and past President of the Canadian Library Association. I don't think CILIP officers were present - a pity, as the organisation needs to take leadership and come to grips with this important topic which library associations around the world are actively discussing - and taking necessary action. ISC found IFLA undemocratic in that information about this highly relevant meeting was not allowed to be advertised in the daily IFLA paper, IFLA Express. So much for censorship hiding under the guise of some petty technicalities.

- A number of individuals and organisations, including ISC, met to discuss the need for supporting Palestine libraries. A network of interested people has been set up to explore how the librarians can support the development of libraries in Palestine. IFLA also agreed to send a delegation to Palestine to prepare a report on the library reality there.
- Perhaps the most fruitful "fringe" meetings I took part in were held in the café where it was possible to meet old and new friends. This provided the most important opportunity to connect with the large number of progressive people attending IFLA.

### **Some people, some organisations**

I met a large number of interesting people and groups. Information for Social Change has been working closely or will work closely with them. They came from many countries, including Cameroon, Cuba (Marta Terry, the President of ASCUBI, is a very inspiring person. She is very much aware of the wider political world in which libraries operate. She should certainly be invited by CILIP for the next AGM as we have a lot to learn from her), India, Iran, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, Tanzania, USA and Zimbabwe. And of course lots of people from UK.

### **Some positive outcomes**

ISC was able to make personal contacts with many people and organisations we have been in contact with for a long time. Thus we consolidated the International Progressive Librarians Group. I also established links with many African librarians and we are in the process of forming the Progressive African Librarians Group. The Network for supporting Palestinian libraries was another notable achievement.

### **Is IFLA ready for change?**

A case study to give a flavour of how IFLA puts into practice its slogan of "democracy, diversity and delivery": A librarian from Ethiopia needed to be in a wheel chair. She had to come with her daughter to push the wheelchair; they had to walk from the place their taxi dropped them to the IFLA office where wheelchairs were stored. We went for lunch to a local restaurant once, and the wheelchair had to be pushed for about 20 minutes through hazardous traffic. They had to hire a taxi to attend the ISC fringe meeting which was held some way off from the conference centre. I would not be surprised if the daughter never ever goes near a library. No arrangements had been made for the librarian to be taken to Edinburgh as part of a tour organised by IFLA, as the organisers had not prepared for a person in a wheel chair, although this had clearly been indicated.

Does IFLA know about DDA? Could they not have organised electric wheelchairs so daughters do not have to be dragged into the conferences? Could an IFLA volunteer not have been programmed to support people with disabilities? Questions, and more questions...

### **So, was it worth it?**


The final question then: did IFLA meet my expectations? The answer is yes - and no. The official IFLA was remote and beyond approach, shrouded in mists and mysteries. It is particularly important for the organisation to open itself to all, especially to first timers - and this does not mean only organising formal introductory meetings. There has to be a genuine transparency, empowerment and democracy in the way it operates.

An organisation like IFLA needs to focus on real issues that prevent free access to information, knowledge and opportunities for development to people everywhere. It cannot turn its face away from

conditions that create poverty, oppression and inequality on the world scene. It has the potential to be a powerful voice for social justice on a world scale. I think it has not risen to the challenge and the real potential for leading and influencing change is being lost.

Yet there was enough life in the unofficial IFLA, in the commitment and enthusiasm of individuals who participated, to make this a conference well worth a visit. And there is always hope that the "big organisation" can be woken up from its deep sleep and make its mark in a world of oppression, smart bombs, stealth wars and inequality - and join the forces that are daily facing death in order to create a just and equal world.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. The Poison called water privatisation

By Kingsley Oghojafor

Water is God's gift to every living thing. As seen from space, it is one of the most unique features of our planet earth. Water, in both its liquid and frozen forms, cover approximately 75% of the Earth's surface. Believed to have initially arrived on the surface through the emissions of ancient volcanoes, geologic evidence suggests that large amounts of water have likely flowed on Earth for the past 3.8 billion years - i.e. for most of its existence. As a vital substance that sets the Earth apart from the rest of the planets in our solar system, water is a necessary ingredient for the development and nourishment of life.

Water is not a creation of man like cars, houses, companies, bridges, etc. so it is not something to be sold to every person on earth. Water is a necessity for every living person. Like air, water is a 'cannot do without' for all peoples of this world. Water is supposed to be free for all. It is no wonder that nature has blessed the world abundantly with two main things. And they are water and air. The importance of water for human survival is manifested in the fact that it covers the major parts of the world. This is so that mankind will have it in abundance, just as we have air in abundance.

Sadly, unlike air, water is not pure and drinkable in all its forms. 96.5% of the water on earth is sea and salty water and only 3.5% is fresh water. And of this 3.5% only 0.8% is available for us to use, the difference being accounted for by the permanent icebergs of the South and North poles. And more frightening, because of the properties of water resulting from its chemistry, this quantity available to us is not always pure in its natural form. In fact, studies have revealed that about 50% of diseases plaguing man today could be traced to the kind of water consumed. The human toll from impure water, in illness and mortality, is indeed very steep. 1 billion people lack access to drinking water that meets the crudest safety standard. UNICEF reports that 3.8 million developing world children died under the age of 5 last year of diarrhoea deaths caused by impure drinking water. Diarrhoea kills more people than cancer. Most of Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Latin America have no wastewater treatment or facilities. Raw human and industrial wastes are discharged directly into the water used for drinking. The lower quality of the water is worse than the water discharged from the American factories. In India ritual bathers get their bodies exposed to a wide range of pollutants entering rivers such as the Ganges). In China 25 billion tons of unfiltered industrial pollutants went directly in the waterways. There was more water pollution in one country alone, than the whole western world.

So while it is water, water, everywhere, it is also not enough to drink. The World Bank has even predicted that by 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will run short of fresh drinking water.

In order for more people to stay alive and healthy, they have to have access to fresh and clean drinkable water. The importance of water was also emphasized by Fortune magazine recently when it called water, "the oil of the 21st century." (<http://privatization.home.attbi.com/index.html>.) This therefore means that water will be more important to more people than the case is today. That is why private companies, many of which are multinationals, are bent on capitalizing on this 'future oil boom'. They are now poised to spread their tentacles in probing all the countries of the world for opportunities to turn the misery of water-starved regions into profits for their executives and stockholders.

It is very clear that private companies and multinationals are more concerned with profit making than with caring for the people. They are first and foremost accountable to their executives and stockholders


before they are to the public. Most of them are evidently out to make profits and nothing else. The first thing on their minds is how to increase profits using any means necessary. And the fact that people have no alternative to water means that they will always have a willing, desperate and exploited people who will buy water from them.

It is indeed sad that despite the problems that the world is facing because of the lack of clean and drinkable water, more and more private companies /multinationals, and government officials throughout the world, instead of protecting existing supplies, enhancing conservation efforts, helping vulnerable populations, curbing pollution and raising public awareness, are turning to privatisation with the sole aim of transferring the control of this precious resource from the public sector to the private sector.

We have to rely on our governments exclusively to purify and provide us with drinkable and freshwater that will be cheap, within the reach of all humans, and at all times. The very survival of untold millions of people could rest on decisions being made today for the most part behind closed doors in corporate boardrooms and government offices throughout the world. With each drop of water that falls into the hands of private interests, any sustainable solution to the global water predicament moves further and further from the public's grasp. And the further it moves away, the more people will die.

The world has treated global capitalism with too much laxity. And the result is now the poison called privatisation. As part of the prerequisite for capitalism, most parts of the world have engaged in and almost completed the privatisation of almost every sector of their economies. Many Western powers and the World Bank believe that privatisation is the only quid-pro-quo for development of any country. As laudable as the desire for development is, it is also pertinent to mention that dangers exist in the privatisation exercise worldwide, especially the privatisation of key government owned public enterprise that the mass of the people rely on.

### **International Conference on Freshwater**

The importance of the provision of water to its people by every government as a free or affordable commodity was further highlighted in the International Conference on freshwater held in Bonn, Germany. The International Conference on Freshwater was held 3-7 December 2001 in Bonn, Germany. The conference brought together government delegates from 118 countries, including 46 Ministers, representatives from 47 international organizations and delegates of 73 organizations from major groups and civil society. It was a meeting appropriate for the age of global partnerships as it demonstrated that governments, the private sector, civil society and local and grassroots initiatives can work together in a spirit of partnership while acknowledging the differences in their mandates, roles and responsibilities. The conference reviewed the role of water in sustainable development, took stock of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and identified how this implementation can improve. The conference recommended priority actions under the following three headings: governance, mobilizing financial resources, and capacity building and sharing knowledge. For more details, visit the conference web site at <http://www.water-2001.de/> or contact the Secretariat of the International Conference on Freshwater, Tulpenfeld 7, 53113 Bonn, Germany; tel: 49-228-28046-55; fax 49-228-28046-60; email: info  water-2001.de

The challenge of providing good cultural water for a sustainable development among various countries of the world was the main subject of discourse. Expectedly, the conference rightly noted that the provision of freshwater and water resources management generally are essentially the responsibility of the governments all over the world. Among its recommendations were that government policy on water should focus on the development of infrastructure that will make freshwater possible for everybody. It maintained that the policy of provision of water by governments worldwide should be linked to policies of poverty reduction and sustainable development in general.

To emphasize the importance of water as a key responsibility of governments worldwide, the conference also recommended that government policies should equitably and suitably allocate water to basic human needs, the functioning of the ecosystems, and different economic uses, including food production, while desertification and drought require the development of new water policies.

The emphasis of the Conference, and many like it in the past, clearly spells out the importance of water as a very critical element to humanity. Water is too important not to be handled by governments. It is a community asset and it should remain so. But like the proverbial African dog that refused to listen to the hunter's whistle, the governments and private companies have refused to listen to the voice of reason.

It will be pertinent for me to count the dangers of water privatisation so that we will know how monstrous it is and why it should be nipped in the bud now.

### **Privatisation exposes countries to economic hiccups:**

This is especially true of countries whose governments need an avenue to shy away from the duty of providing their people the necessities of life, which include water. It is a fact that many governments, especially the sit-tight despots in Africa, need an opportunity to evade their duty of providing their people with the basic things of life. They prefer to sell off the people's public companies that help to keep them alive. And a good opportunity open to them is privatisation.

### **Privatisation will benefit foreigners more than locals**

Many people in those countries whose governments are hell-bent on privatisation, have expressed fear that the privatisation exercise would not benefit them but would only end up further enriching foreign interests and local money bags alone. This is because very few people in most of the developed and developing countries will partake in the privatisation exercise. Only the rich and the strong will enjoy the 'scramble and partition of all the "for sale" properties of the government'

### **Privatisation will lead to loss of jobs**

Another major fear about privatisation concerns the impending loss of present and future employment. The International Labour Organisation, in 1997 said 'improvements in efficiency have been leading to job losses in many parts of the world'. Also the lack of modernization and lack of competition will eventually contribute to higher job losses. The private companies and multinationals are more concerned with profits, so they will be willing to cut as many jobs as possible to continue to make profits. They would not care how many lives would be adversely affected by their actions. All they want is to provide a report to their executives and stockholders that shows 'profit'. Many in the developed countries have continued to express concern that it will result in more retrenchment of workers and the general state of lack of care for the ordinary people

### **Privatisation means only one thing for the advocates-PROFIT. And it means another different thing too for those fighting against it, - POISON**

Many of the poor people all over the world, especially the third world countries, are going to be particularly hit by the whole privatisation exercise, especially the proposed privatisation of water. This is because in all spheres of life, all is not well in these countries. Many of them, especially in Africa and the other Third World countries cannot even afford to eat. And now with the proposed privatisation of water, we will surely see more deaths from not only starvation but also thirst. I envisage a situation whereby it will be 'water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink'. Of course, this will happen because that is what privatisation will cause. There will be water everywhere but the people will not be able to afford to buy it.

### **The privatisation of water for the Third World would result also in more fraudulent transfer of their lean foreign exchange earnings**

This would happen through over-invoicing. Equally true is the fact that privatisation of public enterprises like water companies would ensure that many of the Third World countries remain forever peripheral economies and consequently, never industrialized.

### **Privatisation is politically unpopular**

Water has long been viewed as a community asset in the developed and developing countries of the world, even in the United States. The decision to keep water utility in the public realm, therefore, may often be a political decision rather than a financial one. Many people are nervous to mix protection of the environment and public health - two highly charged issues - with profits. They feel that it is a political responsibility of their governments to provide them with water. Responsibility is the keyword here and not profit.

More so, privatisation can become politically unpopular because the people believe that privatisation will simply transfer authority from an inefficient public monopoly to a price-gouging private monopoly. This assumption is more common in Third World countries, like Africa, where most public companies perform far below expectation.

### **Privatisation will endanger the environment as a result of bulk water export**

Private companies and multinationals, fully aware of the bleak water supply prognostications, will engage in the mad dash to obtain access to fresh water that they can sell at huge profits, as high as 35 percent. This mad rush will lead to massive bulk water export from water-rich countries to water-poor countries. And as it increases (which it is sure to), the environment will be threatened because massive extraction of water from its natural sources on a constant basis will result in ecological imbalance and destruction. Also disrupting aquifers by over-extraction often damages the environment and socio-economic standards. Groundwater is being over-extracted as it is, and once aquifers are emptied or polluted, they are almost impossible to restore. At the end of the day what will we have? We will be left with an endangered environment where everyone will be at risk of not having the right water to drink and use.

### **Privatisation has no regard for the poor**

Privatisation is sure to leave the poor people of the world with no access to clean water. Despite the World Bank and International Monetary Fund privatisation schemes in the developing world, many people in the developing world still believe strongly that the schemes usually result in reduced access to water for the poor. The private companies and multinationals that have bought the water companies will always utilize rate hikes to maximize profits, which, by characterization, is their bottom line. This bottom line often comes at the expense of water quality and customer service, but not at the expense of maintaining inflated executive salaries. So because of the inappropriate aspects of handling water as a marketable commodity, rather than a basic human need and a natural resource, the poor are often denied access. Because living without water is not an option, like going without food, medicine or education, the poor are then forced to buy water to be able to stay alive.

### **Privatisation is forced on many countries by the World Bank/IMF**

"Structural adjustment" programs foisted upon governments seeking loans often include water privatisation as a condition. Impoverished, politically enfeebled countries are hardly in a position to refuse these conditions, as doing so would cause them to default on their debts. As a result, the World Bank and IMF are able to provide lucrative and virtually risk-free contracts for multinationals, due to guaranteed rates of return and investment protection clauses. Most of the Third World Sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria adopted the policy of privatisation in 1986 as an integral part of a larger reform Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) propagated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for external debt relief.

### **Privatisation is almost impossible to reverse**

This is a very important disadvantage leading from privatisation because if a country decides that it has erred in privatising its water, it cannot reverse the decision easily. In some instances it is impossible. Once a government agency hands over its water system to a private company, withdrawing from the agreement borders on the unattainable. The best way that a country can try to do this is to claim that the private company has breached the terms of contract. But herein lies another problem. The problem is that proving breach of contract is a difficult and costly ordeal. And multinational trade agreements provide corporations with powerful legal recourse. A private company, for instance, can use the North



American Free Trade Agreements secretive tribunals to contest challenges to privatisation. And in World Bank loan deals, which often make water privatisation a condition, companies are usually guaranteed cash payments if a government agency returns its water system to public control.

### **Privatisation leads to corruption**

Checks and balances that help in preventing corruption, such as answerability and transparency, are missing at every step of the process of the water privatisation, from bidding on a contract to delivering water. Contracts are usually worked out behind closed doors with the details often still kept secret after the contract is signed, even though it is the public that will be directly affected by the conditions of the contract. This circumstance opens itself up to bribery, which, if recent scandals throughout the world are any indication, is not an uncommon occurrence. It is true that anything done in secret is not done with all honesty.

### **Privatisation of water will lead to poor water quality**

As profits rather than the public good drive corporate agendas, privatisation usually results in the compromising of environmental standards. Most of the private companies and multinationals will be more concerned in making more and more profits and will not be too interested in the quality of water they provide to the public. That is why the National Association of Water Companies (NAWC), which represents the U.S. private water industry, intensively and perennially lobbies Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency to refrain from adopting higher water quality standards. The NAWC also persistently requests that all federal regulations be based on sound cost-benefit analysis, which means that public health is compromised for the sake of higher profits.

Conclusively, the proposed privatisation of water is a wrong step in the wrong direction. It is bad enough that we have to contend with most of the public enterprises being privatised, but now with the proposed privatisation of water, the whole world will be in danger of committing genocide as millions of people will die because they will not be able to afford water. Presently, more than a billion people lack drinking water - and in much of the developing world these numbers are rising (Ghazi, 1999).

It is now up to all of us to do the best we can to fight this menace because, whether we want to accept it or not, we are all going to be affected by the privatisation of water. This therefore makes it necessary for all of us to speak with one voice to oppose the plans of privatisation of water. Edmund Burke said, 'It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing for evil to triumph'. We should therefore not keep silent but volubly oppose, with all our might, the privatisation of water. It is the responsibility of all good people world-wide to oppose the privatisation of water.

As Charles De Gaulle of France once said, 'politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians', so also should we all say -'water is too serious a matter to be left to the private individuals and companies'. The happy future of our earth and all that exists in it depends on whether or not the privatisation of water takes complete effect in all countries of the world.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. The Quiet Storm

By Jane Mackenzie

Imagine living in a country where anti-capitalist books are banned from libraries, the only reading materials available are fluffy novels, and librarians are anarchist outcasts. If the privatisation of libraries continues that is where we are heading.

The library of the future smells of coffee. Not surprising since there's a coffee bar inside. Customers queue to pay their borrowing fee for books at the automated date-stamping machines. A frustrated student gives up his computerised search for a history reference book, but not before fending off several adverts based on his previous reading habits. There are no seats, which means no old or homeless people hanging around. There are no librarians.

Poor old librarians. The job carries a stereotype of dowdy, meek people with an unhealthy interest in card indexing who 'shush' noisy readers. These days, however, librarians are having to become a far more radical breed.

Around 3,000 library workers from all over the world arrive in Scotland next week for a conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Ruth Rikowski is organising a fringe meeting entitled 'The Profit Virus: Globalisation, Libraries and Education'.

Rikowski is a chartered librarian who used to work in Newham and currently lectures on information at the University of Greenwich. She is also a leading light of Information for Social Change, an activist group for library workers. "There can be no place where a sense of sharing is more powerful - borrowing books, returning books, the community sharing books, stories, information and knowledge," she says.

Rikowski's main concern is that libraries are next on the hit-list for the big corporations, which are gradually taking over public services. She's not alone in her fears. "It's not the case that all library and information workers agree with happily swimming along in the tide. There are a considerable number of library organisations showing grave concern," she adds.

GATS, the general agreement on trade in services, opens up many public services to competitive markets. Only services in which there is no competition, such as national security, can be excluded.

IFLA's official position is that GATS will eventually undermine the tax-supported status of public sector libraries everywhere. "Without tax support, the library's role as a democratic institution that makes available the widest range of material reflecting the diversity of society, will be compromised," says their official policy statement.

In the London Borough of Haringey the libraries are already privately run. After inspectors found a "poor service and no possible improvement" in 1999, the council hired Instant Library Ltd. as contractors to run the service.

Mick Martin, who works for Book Aid International, a charity that helps create libraries in the developing world, lives in Haringey. "Where I live, no one seems to know about the take-over. Library staff are waiting to see what will develop." He says staff are worried that in order to increase short-term

borrowing the firm may buy trendy titles of little use in a year's time. "As with all privatisation, profits will be the bottom line. Railway track maintenance is appalling, but small sub-contractors make record profits. Will library jobs go? Will more charges be introduced? Will we just get shafted as usual? Probably yes," he says.

Even those who are opposed to the privatisation agenda say Instant Library Ltd. is a "nice" company with the skills to help the failing north London service pull its socks up. But they fear it is a Trojan horse. The next takeover is just as likely to be by Group 4, Capita, Serco or ITNet - some of the main players in the contracted-out public service industry, and all have been criticised by unions for downgrading public services in profit-driven, cheapest-wins competitive market places. Meanwhile, there's already been one row in Haringey after a playgroup was asked by new bosses to leave the library room that it had been using for more than a decade.

A spokeswoman for Instant Library Ltd. says, "Instant Library does not see private sector involvement as a threat. In Haringey, service is still provided by librarians, regardless of who employs them. Public libraries have a long track record of involvement with the private sector and have often outsourced some functions, such as IT systems and infrastructure support. Outsourcing is becoming common in areas that were once exclusively public-run, such as hospitals and environmental services.

"The 'Best Value' process requires local authorities to consider the most appropriate means of delivering services, including outsourcing, so opportunities for private sector involvement may increase in the future. If they do, Instant Library would be delighted to be involved."

Public services union Unison has fought battles against privatisation in numerous services already. A spokeswoman says: "Only a very small number of councils have taken the privatisation route for libraries. But we wouldn't want to be complacent about it."

Public libraries have been around in Britain since the Public Library Act in 1850 allowed councils to set up lending libraries. These had to be free to visit but many charged a penny for borrowing. There was moral panic. The Victorian middle classes feared giving workers access to free reading rooms would create hotbeds of revolution. Others saw libraries as an opportunity to "improve" the masses but wanted to control what the poor were allowed to read, with restrictions on 'radical' works. In time, public libraries became the amazing resource that allowed generations of Britons free access to books.

An Audit Commission report this May found that a third of the population use libraries, making a total of 290 million visits a year. Despite the explosion of cheap bookshops and a steep decline in library use in the past decade, more books are still borrowed than bought.

Things are changing in the library world. Like Blue Peter not being allowed to name drop Sellotape, libraries have been free from the dirty world of business for over a hundred years. Now cash-strapped services are introducing coffee-shops, competing with video rental stores and entering into sponsorship agreements. As computers and Internet access are shoehorned into every library, Microsoft logos are ubiquitous.

Jonathan Rutherford ran in local elections in Islington as the 'Save Arthur Simpson Library' candidate. The library in the Finsbury Park area still faces the planned closure, although the council says it is not shutting it, just moving it to another location three-quarters of a mile away. Rutherford says, "Libraries are part of people's feelings about where they live. They're a public service and doing away with them feels like an act of vandalism." He says library staff backed his anti-closure campaign behind the scenes, but were gagged by their council employer. He adds that compared to fighting for hospitals or schools, campaigns for libraries might seem irrelevant. "Yes, health is about life or death. But libraries are about hopes for the future. They are about what kind of culture we want to live in. People do feel pretty strongly about them."

He says professional librarians are gradually being edged out and replaced with cheaper, less qualified staff. "There's no children's librarian in Islington now," he says. "Children get a poorer service because of that."

Some librarians fear the drive to be 'competitive' will lead to an explosion of populism, with 10 copies of the latest blockbuster novel made available at the expense of one useful but expensive reference book. Others fear more disturbing levels of censorship as mega-corporations remove from the shelves of their privatised libraries any books critical of their behaviour. The social control that the Victorians dreamed of could become a reality.


In Hackney, librarians are now on strike every Saturday. The row began over pay, but the protesting staff are also unhappy over council plans to close four out of seven libraries to cut costs. A University College London library attendant was jailed for protesting at last year's Gothenburg summit.

Around the world, librarians are becoming so active that Internet search engine Yahoo has a special category for librarian activism. IFLA and Information for Social Change are listed alongside angry library workers from other countries where libraries face the same threats. These include Warrior Librarian, Radical Librarian, Avenging Librarian, Anarchist Librarian and even Snarky Librarian.

Warrior Librarian is preparing for battle. Everyone else who wants to defend public libraries should wake up and smell the coffee.

This article was originally published in The Big Issue no 501, Aug 12-18th 2002, pp. 10-11. Jane Mackenzie is the Deputy Editor (News) of The Big Issue.

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. Schools: The Great GATS Buy

By Glenn Rikowski

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the pivotal figure, Jay Gatsby is elusive, hard to pin down. Through Gatsby, Fitzgerald plays off the relation between illusion and reality. Gatsby organises parties and sometimes doesn't turn up for them. He is distanced from his own creations and effects.

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of 1994 seems to have a similar kind of existence. It appears to be a shadowy force, with massive potential to disrupt, undermine and transfigure public services - yet distanced from their privatisation. The GATS' substantive impact is in some doubt, as many governments - especially here in the UK - seem hell bent on nurturing the business take-over of public services, GATS or no.

A common way to approach the relationship between the GATS and public services is to do an "impact" assessment, as the Association of University Teachers has undertaken for UK higher education, and as some Canadian GATS critics have done for Canadian schools. Whilst having tremendous value, such impact assessments are partially speculative - developing scenarios regarding what might or could happen through the application of GATS imperatives and disciplines. But this is only half the picture, and the relation between GATS and public services ideally needs to be approached on the basis that it is a two-way thing, and that government policies affect differentially the nature of the relation for each service, and for each country. This article explores the relation between schools and the GATS in England today, but first a few words on the GATS.

The GATS seeks to open up 160 services sectors to international capital. Specifically, it aims to create a 'level playing field' thereby avoiding discrimination against foreign corporations entering services markets. The process of trade liberalisation in services (including currently public ones) is progressive; it will be deepened and strengthened over time, and Part IV of the GATS Agreement makes this clear. In this scenario, 'public' services will progressively be turned into internationally tradable commodities. UK Government claims that public services are exempt from the GATS have no firm foundation. International trade law lecturer Markus Krajewski has analysed the GATS Agreement in detail. He concluded that the Agreement makes it impossible to tell whether public services are included under GATS. This makes the GATS fiendishly difficult to combat on the basis of what is actually written down in the Agreement. On the one hand, if it was clear that public services were included under the GATS then governments, corporations and pro-GATS lobbyists could give no assurances that the 'GATS has nothing to do with privatisation', as they do currently. Their reassurances to concerned organisations and their patronising arguments that anti-GATS folk are merely scare mongering would not be taken seriously, as they sometimes are today. On the other hand, if it were clear that public services were excluded from GATS provisions then two things would be obvious. First, anti-GATS activists and trade unions could defend public services from the GATS monster on the basis of international trade law, and corporations attempting to argue that public services were incorporated within the GATS would clearly be on a loser. Anti-GATS forces could confront corporations that attempted to use the GATS to further their interests in public services by using the actual Agreement against them. Secondly, it would be clear that New Labour is really keen on the business take-over of public services, and is not being forced or cajoled into it by trade rules framed by some distant, business-friendly institution such as the WTO.

Meanwhile, the opacity of the GATS is cunning indeed. It has the potential to intellectually disarm GATS critics. Anti-GATS activists have no firm footing for critiquing the Agreement.

The current round of GATS negotiations at the WTO headquarters in Geneva started up in February 2000; almost directly after the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle late-1999 broke up in disarray following the anti-WTO protests there. An overall deal has to be brokered for December 2004, to come into force in 2005. So for anti-GATS activists, trade unions and defenders of public services there is some urgency.

A good starting point for exploring the relation between schools and the GATS is the GATS Agreement itself, together with the Schedule of Commitments for education in relation to the European Union (EU). The UK's GATS commitments are incorporated within those for the EU, though there are a few national differences (see WTO, 1994). On information gleaned from the EU GATS Infopoint, it appears education has already been lost to the GATS. For primary education, 20 countries committed themselves to GATS disciplines in 1994, and for secondary education 22 countries took the plunge. The EU is GATS-committed for both primary and secondary education.

The GATS incorporates four modes of service supply. Mode 1 is "cross-border" supply, the 'supply of a service from the territory of one Member to a consumer in the territory of another' (EU GATS-Infopoint, p.1). Mode 2 supply is concerned with "consumption abroad", where 'the consumer of the service travels to the service supplier' (ibid.). Mode 3, "commercial presence" is 'where the service suppliers establishes in the foreign market as a legal entity in the form of a subsidiary or a branch' (ibid.). For all of these modes of supply, the EU's commitments for primary and secondary education are "none" - which is the opposite of what it sounds. "None" means that a country is committing itself to ensuring that there are 'no restrictions which are inconsistent with GATS rules covering participation in the market by foreign service suppliers' (EU GATS-Infopoint, p.2). In relation to UK/EU GATS commitments on primary and secondary education, there are two aspects to this. Firstly, for the UK, there are no barriers regarding 'Limitations on Market Access' (though a few EU countries have some limitations on market access incorporated into the EU Schedule for either primary or secondary education). Thus, UK primary and secondary education 'markets' appear to be open to foreign suppliers. WTO members committing themselves to opening up primary and secondary education through GATS (as we have), must show any limitations on access for foreign suppliers - and then these can be challenged through the WTO Disputes Panel by the corporations' national governments, if they are WTO members. Only national governments that are WTO Members can participate in the complex WTO Dispute Settlement Process (Rikowski, 2001, p.11). Corporations would have to lobby and persuade national governments to go through with this if there was any reluctance amongst trade ministers and officials to pursue the case.

Furthermore, as we have signed up to the GATS regarding primary and secondary education, then those services are also subject to the "Limitations on National Treatment" provision. Under this GATS rule, member states must acknowledge any limitations in the treatment of foreign suppliers that puts them in a less favourable position than their domestic counterparts. For example, Edison Schools (from the States) must be alerted to any differences in the ways they are being treated as compared with UK education services suppliers if they enter the UK schools market. Failure to provide the necessary information might result in the foreign supplier seeking recompense through the GATS via their national governments taking the case through the WTO Dispute Settlement Process. Transparency is the issue here. The UK has no limitations on the National Treatment provision in the EU Schedule either. Finally, only in Mode 4 supply, the "presence of natural persons" from another country does some limitation regarding foreign primary and secondary education suppliers possibly apply. Mode 4 supply is "Unbound" for EU primary and secondary education. "Unbound" means a country is making no commitment either to open up its market or to keep it as open as it was at the time of accession into the WTO. Practically, what this means for Mode 4 supply is that if Edison Schools wanted to set up operations in the UK, then the company would probably have to use UK employees, as general immigration rules would still apply. It is likely that teachers from the US couldn't be just flown in to work in Edison UK schools regardless. However, the nature of the "unbound" status on Mode 4 supply muddies the picture, with no clear barrier to US teachers being jetted into Edison UK schools established on the basis of the EU GATS Schedule.

From the above account, it might appear that the UK (via the EU) has a pretty much 'open door' policy regarding the foreign supply of primary and secondary education services. It seems that education

activists and trade unionists are eight years too late on GATS rules for education services that are technically irreversible. Yet this is a misleading impression, which is exposed as such on deeper examination of the WTO's Schedule of Commitments for education services under GATS (WTO, 1994). Section 5 of the EU's Schedule of Commitments indicates that in relation to education, the GATS refers to "privately funded education services". From this, it might seem that the only education services in relation to schools under threat from the GATS are independent and private schools. Why should we get too agitated if only Eton, Harrow and Roedean and their ilk are under threat from GATS rules? They are clearly in the 'education market', so must take the consequences and face competing foreign providers.

However, once again, the GATS language is cleverly crafted. The Schedule does not pinpoint private education 'institutions', but privately funded education 'services'. It is not the case that a whole education institution has to be a for-profit outfit for the GATS to apply. Any of its constituent services - from frontline ones such as teaching, to cleaning, school meals services and the school library - could fall under the GATS if private capital is involved. Furthermore, private sector operators in school improvement, equal opportunities and recruitment and other schools' services, previously supplied by the local education authority (LEA) also fall under the GATS.

It could be argued this misses the point: are not these services still 'publicly funded' even though education businesses like Nord Anglia and school meals providers like Initial Services are delivering the service? It could be argued they are not basically 'privately funded' education services. A number of points are relevant here.

First, this argument assumes that 'public' money remains 'public' even when transferred to a private sector service deliverer ruled by profit-generation. However, it could be argued that once the contract is signed to deliver frontline teaching, school management or school improvement services the 'public money' undergoes transformation into private capital. This is the magic of money, the illusion on which New Labour and GATS protagonists' arguments rest. At a meeting in a church hall in Newham following the Trade Justice Movement lobby of Parliament earlier this year, Stephen Timms, former Schools Minister (now at the DTI), argued the private sector was being brought in to improve standards, and that this was not privatisation as the pertinent services were still being publicly funded. This argument is naïve at least, and positively misleading.

Secondly, for some New Labour schools policies, private finance forms an element of start-up capital. In the City Academies (or just Academies now, under the Education Act 2002), for specialist schools and for some education action zones, private capital forms part of the start-up fund. The foundational significance of private capital is even clearer in the case of schools built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), where money to build the school is raised at commercial rates in the money markets by private companies. In all these cases, it would seem that the involvement of the private sector opens up schools to the GATS. These are private education services that have virused public money.

Thirdly, under the Education Act 2002 school governing bodies can set themselves up as companies. They then have the power to invest in other companies. Furthermore, school companies can merge to form "federations" - chains like McDonalds - to gain economies of scale, thereby increasing profit-making capacity. Schools can enter into deals with private sector outfits. The Act gives the Secretary of State new powers to form companies for involvement in any area of school or LEA life. It provides a de-regulatory framework for the business takeover of schools, and hence also for the virus-ing of GATS throughout our school system. Of course, New Labour can still argue that all this is 'publicly funded', but the previously public finance is transfigured into private capital in the process. Through these mechanisms, schools are exposed to the GATS.

Fourthly, directly after the General Election victory in 2001, Stephen Timms and Sports Minister Richard Caborn promoted a series of 'partnerships' between private and state schools. Thirty-four Independent/State School Partnerships were established on 3rd July 2001. Dissolution of the barriers and distinction between public finance and private capital muddies the issue of whether schools services are either state financed or 'privately funded'. The insurgence of private schools into the state sector could well be dragging the GATS in its wake.



Finally, as Belgian teacher and education activist Nico Hirtt (2000, p.14) has indicated, only education systems financed solely by the state and with total exclusion of any commercial operations are excluded from the GATS. This point underscores the previous four: the greater the business involvement in state schools, the more they are opened up to GATS and a future as internationally tradable commodities. On this account, policies and mechanisms that nurture the business takeover of schools can be viewed as the national faces of the GATS (for more on this see Rikowski, 2002). These are the national, local and school-level GATS enablers that facilitate the business takeover of schools. In Britain, they include PFI, outsourcing and information and computer technology deals. Ofsted is transfigured into a GATS-facilitator every time it locates a 'weak' school ripe for business takeover.

Rather than a Geneva-based GATS monster forcing the UK government to embrace GATS, every time the private sector enters, deepens and expands its involvement in our schools it opens those "educational services" to the GATS. The fight against the business take-over of schools is simultaneously the struggle against GATS and our education services being catapulted into international education markets. New Labour's education policy is virusing the GATS into our schools and LEAs. One day, a company in Detroit or Vancouver that focuses primarily on the bottom-line could control your local secondary school. Now, that would certainly stretch the notion of a 'community school' and the concept of democratic accountability.

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Glenn Rikowski teaches in the School of Education, University College Northampton. His latest publication, co-edited with Dave Hill, Peter McLaren and Mike Cole, is Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory (2002, Lexington Books). A shorter version of this article appeared in the November 2002 issue of Red Pepper.

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## ISC 16. Anti-globalisation websites

By Ruth Rikowski

### Library Websites

BRITISH COLUMBIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

<http://www.vcn.bc.ca>

CANADIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

<http://www.cla.ca>

EBLIDA - European Bureau of Library and Information and Documentation Association

<http://www.eblida.org>

IFLA

<http://www.ifla.org>

A-LIBRARIAN-AT-EVERY-TABLE

<http://www.cas.usf.edu/lis/a-librarian-at-every-table/>

### Other websites

CANADIAN CENTER FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/>

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON GLOBALISATION (CRG)

<http://globalresearch.ca>

CORP WATCH

<http://www.corpwatch.org/>

GATS WATCH

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo/gatswatch/GATSandDemocracy>

GLOBAL TRADE WATCH

<http://www.tradewatch.org/>

GLOBALIZATION AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL POLICY

<http://www.uncommongood.net/article/art3.htm>

INDEPENDENT NEWS AND ANALYSIS ON THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF

<http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/>

MINING POLICY INSTITUTE

<http://www.mpi.org.au/>

MINING WATCH CANADA

<http://www.miningwatch.ca/>

PROBE CANADA

<http://www.probeinternational.org/>

WTO WATCH

<http://www.wtowatch.org/>

For - some articles on globalisation issues

<http://www.granma.cu/ingles/actualidad-i.html>

Globalise Resistance Website

<http://www.resist.org.uk>

Paul Maxwell Robinson Websites

<http://www.fosca.com/paulr.htm>

<http://www.resist.org.uk/paulrobinson.html>

### **Websites referenced by the World Development Movement**

UK Department of Trade and Industry, Trade in Services

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/worldtrade/service.htm>

European Commissions INFO-POINT on World Trade in Services

<http://gats-info.eu.int/index.html>

European Services Forum

[www.esf.be](http://www.esf.be)

GATS: What is fact and what is fiction? A civil society response to the WTO's publication - GATS Fact and Fiction <http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo/gatswatch/rebuttal-intro.html>

GATSwatch:

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo/gatswatch/>

This is a website containing links to all of the below, as well as links to sites of organisations raising concerns about the GATS negotiations.

Gateway page to the WTO's information on GATS:

[http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/serv\\_e/serv\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_e.htm)

E. Gould, 'Response to Facts and Fiction', The Council of Canadians, forthcoming at

<http://www.canadians.org>

C. Ragavan, 'GATS - Fact and Fiction: at best a partial truth', Third World Economics, 1-15 April 2001, Third World Network <http://www.twinside.org.sg>

Sites showing photos of the murder in Genoa

[http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article\\_id=7306](http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=7306)


<http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~dtsang>

<http://kuci.org>

<http://kuci.org/~dtsang/>

<http://www.nauseamanifesto.com/genoa/index.html>

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# Information for Social Change



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## ISC 16. In the Spirit of Wandering Librarians

By John Pateman

"I never felt Cuban until I learned to read and write" - Juan Martinez, campesino (peasant)

In 1961, hundreds of thousands of Cubans together confronted a social problem that still concerns much of the world today - illiteracy. Through mass mobilisations, the country's students, teachers, workers and peasants achieved in one year what was apparently impossible : the goal of basic literacy for almost Cuba's entire population.

In 2002 I visited Cuba for the fifth time, to rediscover the energy, dedication and youthful spirit of those who participated in this brilliant literacy campaign in Cuba. I visited libraries, bookshops and museums in Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo and Havana. The highlight of my trip was being awarded the "Distincion Por La Cultura Nacional" by the Cuban government for my work in support of Cuban libraries and the Cuban Revolution.

### Santiago de Cuba

Santiago de Cuba, the island's second biggest city, is also known as the Cradle of the Cuban Revolution. It was here, on 26 July 1953, that a small group of revolutionaries, lead by Fidel Castro, attacked the Moncada Barracks, a hated symbol of the corrupt US-backed Batista regime. The attack did not succeed and Castro was detained in prison for nearly two years. After his release, Castro went to Mexico where he organised another attempt to overthrow the hated Batista government. In November 1956 he sailed with 82 others, including Ernesto "Che" Guevara, on the cruiser "Granma" from Mexico to Cuba. They arrived in Cuba on 2 December 1956; this was one week before I was born and I have felt in this, and many other ways, a very close affiliation with the Cuban Revolution.

Following the Triumph of the Revolution in January 1959, the Moncada Barracks were turned into a school. A small museum is attached to the school, telling the story of the attack on 26 July, evidence of which are the bullet holes which can still be seen all around the entrance to the building. The museum has a bookstall and I purchased a copy of "Island in the Storm" by Gail Reed. This is an account of the Cuban Communist Party's Fourth Congress, which was held in Santiago de Cuba in 1991. This proved to be the most critical meeting in the Revolution's history, as it came soon after the collapse of the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe and the imminent implosion of the Soviet Union. Cuba relied on these countries for 85% of its trade, and so began what the Cuban's call their "Special Period in Peacetime". This Special Period has not yet ended, but the economy has improved as a result of tourism and a number of other economic measures taken by the Cuban government. Socialism is still alive and well in Cuba, but they now face the new threat of George W. Bush and his war on the so-called "axis of evil".

Architecturally, the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba left an indelible mark on the city in the form of the soaring Hotel Santiago de Cuba, the huge Teatro Jose Maria Heredia, the dramatic Antonio Maceo Monument, the new train station and the modern terminal building at Antonio Maceo International Airport. In addition to visiting these, I also went to several bookshops, including the Libreria Internacional (which has a good selection of books in English), Libreria Manolito del Toro (good for political literature) and Libreria Viet Nam (one of the top bookstores in town). All of these bookshops were well stocked and well used, a testimony to Cuba's thriving book publishing industry.

The price of books is also remarkably cheap, and well within the income of the average Cuban. A new programme has been launched in Cuba to enable each family to develop its own library in the home. A selection of books, known as the Family Library, can be purchased for as little as 60 pesos. This forms part of the Cuban National Reading Campaign, and is also designed to undermine the so-called "independent library movement", funded by the US Interests Section in Havana. This movement is neither independent nor to do with libraries. It consists of small collections of books in the homes of political dissidents who are seeking residency in the US. Backed by the US based "Friends of Cuban Libraries" (sic) and Robert Kent, this movement has been discredited by the signing of agreements in support of state run Cuban libraries by the American Library Association (ALA) and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

The Biblioteca Elvira Cape is Santiago's largest public library. It is just off the city's main square, Parque Cespedes (where Fidel announced the Triumph of the Revolution from the balcony of the Town Hall in 1959), and is almost opposite the famous Casa de la Trova, (where members of the internationally renowned Buena Vista Social Club regularly appear). The Elvira Cape library was founded in 1899, the same year as the nearby Museo Municipal Emilio Bacardi Moreau, one of Cuba's oldest functioning museums. The museum was founded by the famous rum distiller and first mayor of Santiago de Cuba, Emilio Bacardi y Moreau (1844-1922). His wife, Elvira Cape, was an outstanding sociologist. They are both buried at the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, which also contains the tomb of Jose Marti, Cuba's national hero. Bacardi rum has not been produced in Cuba since 1959, when the company fled the Revolution and relocated to the Bahamas. The Bacardi company has financed attempts to overthrow Castro and so you are advised not to drink Bacardi rum; instead you should ask for Havana Club, an authentic, superior and ideologically sound Cuban rum.

## **Guantanamo**

Guantanamo is most famous for its US naval base near Caimanera, 21km south of the city of Guantanamo. In 1903, the US government used the Platt Amendment, imposed on Cuba as a condition of independence, to slice off 116 sq km of Cuban territory at the mouth of the Bahia de Guantanamo. In 1934, US President Roosevelt agreed to a Cuban request to change the grant in perpetuity to a 99-year lease, although both sides must agree before the lease can be terminated. The base is a thorn in the side of US-Cuban relations and Castro appears on Cuban TV each year vowing never to cash the cheques which he is sent by the US government for leasing the base. More recently, George W Bush provocatively built a high security prison, "Camp X-Ray", at Guantanamo to house alleged Al Qaeda prisoners. Camp X-Ray was clearly visible when I visited Mirador de Malones, a 320m high hill which affords a sweeping view of the entire base. Using a US 25-cent telescope made in Covington, Kentucky, I could observe the US flags fluttering at Bortheat Gate and pick out American vehicles driving along the roads. More disturbing was the sight of Camp X Ray, which has been built close to the edge of the base, next to a massive mine field. The day of our visit was extremely hot, and I could imagine the suffering of the detained prisoners who are being held in the most barbaric of conditions.

By contrast, the city of Guantanamo itself is bustling with a population of 208,000 and many charming colonial buildings, including the Museo Municipal, which is housed in an old colonial prison built in 1860. Local architect Leticio Salcines (1888-1973) left a number of impressive works around Guantanamo, including the provincial library, the market building, the train station, and his personal residence, the eclectic Palacio Salcines, which is now the Centro Provincial de Arte. I visited the city's main bookshop, Libreria Asdrubal Lopez, and the provincial public library, the Biblioteca Policarpo Pineda Rustan, a former city hall built between 1934 and 1951. Trials of Fulgencio Batista's thugs were held here in 1959, and a number were killed when they grabbed a rifle and attempted to escape. I was given a tour of the building which included a large ground floor lending library, the children's section (in a colonial style courtyard), the reference and audio libraries (on the first floor), and the roof, which gave me a panoramic view of the city.

The library is open 8am to 9pm weekdays, 8am to 5pm Saturday, and 8am to noon Sunday. Late evenings and Sunday opening are a feature of all Cuban public libraries. With a total weekly opening time of 78 hours, these are far in excess of the UK Public Library Standards, and an indication of how socially

inclusive the Cuban library system is. Cuban libraries are used by people from all backgrounds, men and women, Black and White. Last year Cuban libraries were actively used by 8 million Cuban people, from a population of 11 million. This represents 72.7% of the Cuban people; in the UK public libraries are only actively used by 30% of the people.

Public libraries are one of the Triumphs of the Cuban Revolution, and they are a legacy of Cuba's radically successful Literacy Campaign, in which hundreds of thousands of young people were able to reduce their country's grave illiteracy rate to below 4% in one year alone. Not before and never again has a nation been capable of such a rapid, massive improvement in the cultural level of their people. Forty years later, with illiteracy rates in the Third World at critical levels, it is even more important to understand the Cuban example and the way it informed and effected social change. In 1961 the crisis of illiteracy was tackled with such dynamism that for one year, books and pens came symbolically alive.

## Havana

Evidence of the 1961 Literacy Campaign can be found all around Havana, which has its own Literacy Museum and archive of the campaign. While walking through the Plaza de Armas in old Havana, I spotted a copy of "Alfabetecemos" on one of the many bookstalls selling secondhand tomes. Published in 1961, "Alfabetecemos" was one of the two text books used by the Literacy Brigades. As well as teaching people to read, this book also taught people about the Revolution, Co-operatives, Nationalisation, Industrialisation, Racial Discrimination, Friends and Enemies, Imperialism, International Unity, Democracy and other concepts. The other teaching manual, "Venceremos", used phrases that explained some of the profound social reforms of the Cuban Revolution : the campesinos now at last are owners of the land; the campesinos cultivate their land; the Cuban land is rich; Cuba is not alone; united we overcome aggression. They (i.e. The United States) will not be able to stop the Revolution.

The Plaza de Armas also contains the main city library, the Biblioteca Publica Provincial Ruben M Villena. This library has recently been renovated, with financial assistance from Spain. It is open 8am to 8.45pm weekdays, 8am to 4.30pm Saturday, a total of 72 hours per week. In the lobby there was a selection of books and journals from all over the world, many of which have been donated by solidarity organisations. Among these I spotted the "Morning Star", the only English language daily socialist newspaper, and "Cuba Si", the journal of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign.

The Biblioteca Nacional Jose Marti, on the Plaza de la Revolucion, is open to the public, but you must leave your bags in a cloak room. Cuba's National Library occupies 16 floors of books, magazines, a children's library and some exhibition space. Its hours are 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday, 8am - 6pm Saturday, a total of 75 hours per week. I was given a guided tour of the building by Siomara Carrillo from the Relaciones Internacional Department. My tour included the new books section, the audio visual library and the braille collection. These collections can be found in every Cuban library, another indication of how socially inclusive the system is.


Afterwards I had coffee in the office of Eliades Acosta, the Director of the National Library, who was attending a library conference in Mexico. I met his wife, and she gave me several copies of "Revista", the official journal of the Biblioteca Nacional Jose Marti. This journal is published twice a year, in January and July. The issue for July-December 2001 celebrated the centenary of the National Library, 1901-2001. I was also given a copy of "With Honour, Courage and Pride" (2), the defense statements at the sentencing hearings of the five Cuban patriots unjustly condemned by a Miami Federal Court. To find out more about the "Miami Five" and to join the campaign for their release, contact the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. I was also given access to the National Library web site, which contains a wealth of information about this valuable resource, including collections, services, publications and news. Little was I to know that I was soon to feature as headline news on this website !

The reason for this was that Eliades Acosta had recommended me to the Cuban Ministry of Culture for the "Distincion Por La Cultura Nacional". This medal, which is rarely given to non-Cubans, is awarded to those who have contributed to Cuban culture. In my case, the Cuban government conferred the award on 22 January 2001 in recognition of my work to support Cuban libraries. This included my setting up of the Cuban Libraries Support Group in 1999 and my support for the Cuban National Reading Programme. The

award ceremony took place at the National Library at 10am on 29 August 2002. When I arrived, dressed in a traditional Cuban shirt or *guyaberas*, I was ushered into a room where the Cuban flag stood next to the Union Jack. I was introduced to the Vice Minister for Culture, Mr Ismael Gonzalez, and the ceremony began with the playing of the Cuban and British National Anthems. The citation for the award was given by Mayte Vigoa de la Uz, Cadre Director of the Ministry of Culture. Her speech began "The solidarity and the fraternity with the people of Cuba have been developed for the world in the heart and in the work of men like John Pateman". The medal was pinned on me by the Vice Minister who gave me a very firm Cuban hug of friendship and solidarity. I made a short acceptance speech which ended with the slogans "Long Live the Cuban Revolution ! Long Live Comrade Fidel Castro ! Venceremos !" We were then served with rum cocktails while I talked with the Vice Minister and he explained the important role that Culture plays in the Cuban Revolution. He also offered me a job in the National Library, but explained that I had more important work to do for Cuban libraries in the UK before I could take up the offer.

As I left the National Library I looked across Revolution Square at the huge Ernesto "Che" Guevara mural on the side of the Ministry of the Interior. As I stood and thought about this revolutionary country, its wonderful people, dedicated librarians and national heroes, the following came to mind : "And if someone says we are just romantics, inveterate idealists, thinking the impossible, that the masses of people cannot be turned into almost perfect human beings, we will have to answer a thousand and one times : Yes, it can be done; we are right. The people as a whole can advance" - Che Guevara

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. National Cultural Award of Cuba

By John Pateman

On 29 August 2002 John Pateman, Head of Libraries and Heritage for the London Borough of Merton, was given the National Cultural Award of Cuba. The ceremony took place at 10am at Cuba's National Library, the Biblioteca Nacional Jose Marti, in Revolution Square, Havana. The flags of Cuba and the United Kingdom were present. The ceremony, which started with the playing of the Cuban and British National Anthems, was presided over by :

Ismael Gonzalez Gonzalez - Vice Minister of Culture

Mayte Vigoa de la Uz - Cadre Director of the Ministry of Culture

Marcia Medina Cruzata - National Library Vice-Director of Promotion and Development  
Teresita Morales - National Library Vice-Director of Services to General Public

Also present was a group of workers from the National Library, Annette Pateman, family and friends. The award was announced by Mayte Vigoa de la Uz :

"The solidarity and the fraternity with the people of Cuba have been developed for the world in the heart and in the work of men like John Pateman whose activities are being recognised at this ceremony today.

John Pateman chairs the Cuban Libraries Support Group in England. He has got both a BA degree in History and Politics and a Masters Degree in Business Administration. He is a member of the Library Association (now called CILIP) and the Society of Chief Librarians.

He created the Cuban Libraries Support Group in England in order to counteract the defamatory and counter-revolutionary campaign generated by the Independent Libraries Movement.

He launched an important international campaign through his organisation. It also included the United States where he sent documents - specifically to the American Library Association - accusing counter-revolutionary groups that were linked to unpatriotic Cubans who live in that country.

He has also organised several solidarity campaigns with the Cuban people and especially with our librarians, providing support to our National Reading Programme, urging people to send books to Cuban libraries.

Important links have been established between Cuban and UK libraries because of his efforts. Through his articles he has been the spokesman of the work developed by the Cuban Revolution in the creation of libraries giving Cuban people access to reading. The Ministry of Culture has decided to award this distinction to John Pateman because of his tireless work of solidarity with Cuba, promoting the Cuban Revolution achievements at international level and because of his contribution to our people and especially to the Cuban librarians."

The award was presented to John Pateman by Mr Ismael Gonzalez, the Vice Minister of Culture. John Pateman then made a short acceptance speech.



"Vice minister, Senora Eliades Acosta, staff and workers of the National Library Jose Marti.

I would like to thank Eliades Acosta, Director of the National Library Jose Marti, for recommending me to the Ministry of Culture for this award. I am sorry that Eliades could not be here today, due to his attendance at a library conference in Mexico. I am very honoured to receive this award.


Since my first visit to Cuba in 1993, I have worked to build links between libraries in Cuba and the UK. In 1999 I established the Cuban Library Support Group. The aims of this Group are to support Cuban libraries, Cuban library workers and the Cuban Library Association (ASCUBI).

The Cuban Library Support Group will continue its tireless efforts to support the achievements of the Cuban Revolution, in the fields of information, publishing, libraries, literacy and education.

I am proud to have played my small part in assisting the Cuban people and its government, under the leadership of Comrade Fidel Castro, in developing Socialism in Cuba.

"Long Live the Cuban Revolution!  
Long Live Comrade Fidel Castro!  
Venceremos".

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# Information for Social Change



*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

## ISC 16. Global justice, liberation and socialism by Che Guevara, Ocean Press, 2002

**War, racism and economic insustice by Fidel Castro, Ocean Press, 2002**

**Reviewed by John Pateman**

These two books should be read together because they form two side of a seamless story. Che focuses on theory while Fidel talks about practice. Che is historical (1965 speech, 1965 letter, 1966 speech) while Fidel is contemporary (speeches made between September 2000 and November 2001). Yet, despite these differences, the political analysis and solutions offered to social and economic problems are the same. When Che and Fidel worked together in the early years of the Cuban Revolution they must have been a formidable team. For 6 years they established the roots of the Revolution and then, in 1965, Che decided to leave Cuba and export the Revolution to other countries, while Fidel stayed in Cuba to deepen and broaden the Revolution, a process which he continues to lead to this day.

Che's speech to the Afro-Asian conference in Algeria in February 1965 focuses on the need to integrate the struggle for national liberation with socialist ideas. The importance of economic planning is emphasised. Che's letter on "Socialism and Man in Cuba", published in March 1965, stresses that "there is nothing that can educate a person...like living through a revolution". For Che, socialism could not exist if economics was not combined with social and political consciousness. Without an awareness of rights and duties, it would be impossible to construct a new society. Back in 1965 Che was already warning of the dangers of neo-liberalism and globalisation.

Che's message to The Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity ewith the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which took place in Cuba in January 1966, was "Create Two, Three, Many Vietnams". The content of Che's speech, especially his remarks about the crisis in the Middle East and Israel, is surprisingly relevant today. The idea of internationalism on a global scale outlined by Che in his message represents a synthesis of this thought and political praxis. Che recognised that the national bourgeoisie was incapable of standing up to imperialism. Under these circumstances the only way to liberation would be through prolonged peoples war. This book is published in association with the Che Guevara Studies Centre in Havana, established to promote, both inside and outside of Cuba, the thought, life and works of Comandante Che Guevara, recognising the extraordinary significance of his theory, praxis, and ethical legacy - and their validity and timelessness in today's globalised world..

"War, racism and economic injustice" is a sharp, brief selection of recent speeches and interviews with Fidel Castro dating from June 2000 to November 2001. Among them are speeches given in Venezuela, Panama, Cuba, the United States and South Africa. Also included are interventions in the Millenium Summit held at the United Nations in 2000 and a landmark speech to the Racism conference held in Durban, South Africa, in August 2001. Fidel presents a damning indictment of the present world economic and political order. The final two items are speeches given by Fidel on September 22 and November 2 2001 in which he calls on the world to unite against both terrorism and war. This book is published in association with Editora Politica of Havana. And is a continuation of a previous editorial project published in 2000 as "Capitalism in Crisis - globalisation and world politics today", also by Fidel Castro and published by Ocean Press. This is an essential read as well. For more information about Ocean books visit their website at [www.oceanbooks.com.au](http://www.oceanbooks.com.au) or contact Global Book Marketing at info 